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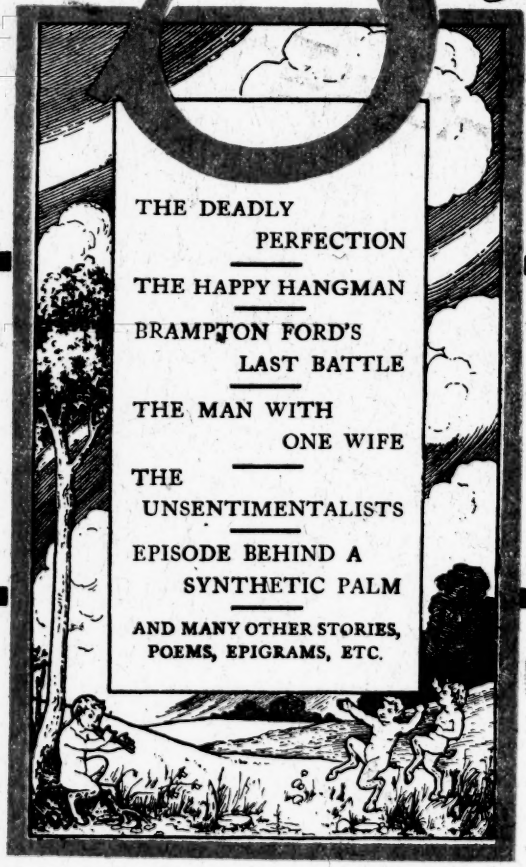

THE DEADLY PERFECTION

THE HAPPY HANGMAN

BRAMPTON FORD'S LAST BATTLE

THE MAN WITH ONE WIFE

THE UNSENTIMENTALISTS

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THE SMART SET

A MAGAZINE OF CLEVERNESS

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Editor—J. W. MILNE

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THE COST OF CURFEW

By H. Dennis Bradley

The Statistics Controller sat in his palatial Bureau, stroked his beautiful grey beard, and thought and thought.

Figures danced before his eyes, figures surged in his brain.

Rising, he flung open his window and gazed over the Metropolis of the world.

Darkness was setting in over the great city, and even as he gazed the solemn peal of Curfew broke upon his ear.

He chuckled as he drew forth sheets of paper. "Not a flaw in the argument," he soliloquised, "not one flaw, for figures cannot lie. In half an hour the Official Tuckers Up will have completed their rounds; not a fire will burn in all London, not a light will glow, not a train will run; the saving in shoe leather alone will suffice to run the war for hours; clothes will wear longer, tobacco and alcohol will be saved in incalculable quantities. This is indeed the Perfect Economy. Every link holds."

A sardonic titter startled him, and turning in his chair he beheld his Evil Genius, the Spirit of Doubt.

"I rather fancied," sneered the Spirit, "that there was a wool shortage."

"Wool?" queried the Controller.

"Have you thought of the vastly increased wear-and-tear of blankets?"

* * * * *

Next morning an order appeared from the offices of the Board of Curfew: "A return is to be furnished at once of all the blankets in the possession of private citizens. For the duration of Summer time no private citizen may use a blanket. Night apparel is forbidden to be worn except during air-raids. Penalty for failing to comply with this regulation will be forfeiture of six months' meat cards."

* * * * *

Considering the wool shortage and the dignified prices of matches and gin, there is no reason why Pope and Bradley's charges should not be equally autocratic. But the House does not practise commercial immorality—which is uninteresting.

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He left a world full of decencies, of ideals, of freedom, of the beautiful things, and comes back to a world of shoddy.

Shoddy ideals, shoddy dictators, shoddy thought, shoddy profiteers, shoddy clothes, shoddy bureaucrats, and shoddy minds—a shoddy life in a world of shoddy.

A world enchained, restricted, standardised, but the whole standard miserably low—like Wordsworth's standard of intoxication.

Think what he went out for. How he will chafe at it all when he returns and finds himself confronted by and in conflict with shoddy mediocrity.

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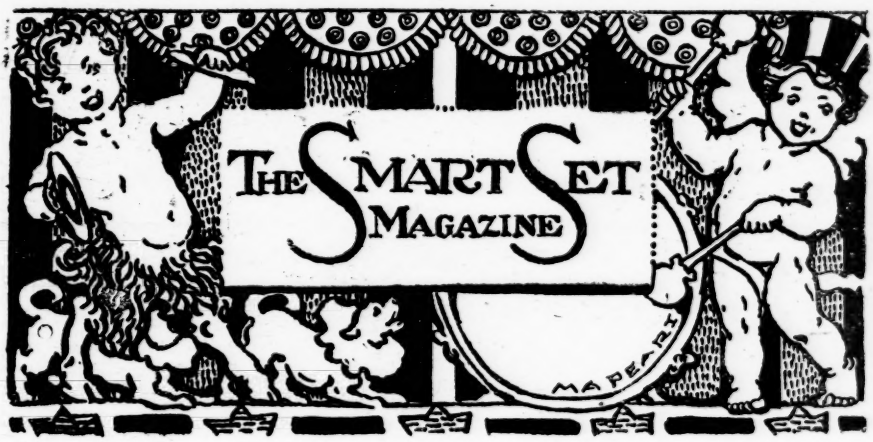

THE DEADLY PERFECTION

By Lillian Foster Barrett

I

GEORGE FLETCHER, with that courteous ease of manner that was his most striking characteristic, passed the usher with a nod and found his way unaided to his seat. The incident, though a trivial one, was the starting point in a neighbouring box, of a discussion delicately fraught with personalities. The readiness of idea pertinent to the subject proved it an old one, but not old enough to have lost its claim to interested debate.

Gordon Cowdrey had made the first comment.

"As much at home as at his club!"

Harmless enough, it would seem, but it furnished just the proper cue and in a moment the argument was on, full heat, with Mrs. Jimmy Treadwell in the lead.

"Of course, he'd *never* marry her," she claimed decisively. "Granted she's good and beautiful, but what of it? Neither constitutes of itself a claim to position."

"But they say at the club—" put in Jimmy tentatively.

"Oh! *On dit! On dit!*" cried Mrs. Jimmy.

Bert Whitelaw as host felt called upon to come to Jimmy's support.

"They do say at the club that George is willing, but the fair Gabrielle holds back," he ventured.

"Nonsense!" protested Mrs. Jimmy. "Men, *our* men, don't marry outside their own set. We're a close corporation when it comes to that."

Lili Whitelaw had been listening, waving her big fan meditatively. Lili always had a big fan which she waved meditatively; it lent just the right note of shifting uncertainty that provoked curiosity as to what was going to happen next.

As someone once very neatly remarked—Lili coiled behind her fan. Her spring was none the less deadly for its artistic *couchment*.

But to-night she seemed a little tired; one looked in vain for her sharp sallies.

Could it be the matter of this girl, Gabrielle Winton—

"What do you think of it?" Mrs. Jimmy confronted Gordon. "Would you bestow your perfectly good name on that Salamander creature you had at the Pier last summer?"

Gordon laughed at this direct treatment,

"Cleo?" he said. "Oh, that's another matter! But I shouldn't be surprised if there were something in this girl holding back. Perhaps George *is* willing—"

Lili leaned forward now, her blue eyes suddenly alight.

"He is," she said slowly. "He told me so himself last night—in the strictest confidence, of course. I put it down to courtesy to the girl, but, you know, I'm beginning to wonder. It may be she is cleverer than we think—"

"What do you mean?" demanded Mrs. Jimmy. "Clever *not* to marry him? With his money and name—"

Lili nodded.

"She may be in love with him," she said quietly.

Mrs. Jimmy showed her annoyance. Lili purposely mixed one up.

Lili, in the meantime, had turned and let her eyes rest with a soft scrutiny on the face of the man under discussion.

"I wish," she said, and her voice struck a note of intensity that was well nigh genuine, "I wish he *would* marry her."

There was a general laugh. It really was very amusing of Lili to take this stand; even her husband seemed to appreciate the nice humour of it. For, considering her confessed penchant for George, one might have expected a less unselfish attitude; but then, when it was a question of Lili, one had ceased long ago to expect anything but the unexpected.

"Bravado!" murmured Mrs. Jimmy to her husband in a tone meant to penetrate.

But Gordon Cowdrey leaned closer to Lili.

"You say that as if you meant it."

"I do," she answered seriously.

Her eyes were again upon Fletcher, and there was a certain eagerness in their depths.

"But I don't understand—" pleaded Gordon.

"The point is—" answered Lili. "When I thought of it as the usual liaison I despaired. But now—"

The man below looked up. Lili flashed him a brilliant smile.

"Now?" asked Gordon, who had watched the exchange.

"If only he *would* marry her! Ah, don't you see? There might be hope for—for others. For, after all—" She gave the suggestion of a little laugh, as the house darkened and the curtain rose. "After all, marriage is so little subtle!"

II

It was the usual drama, styled legitimate, with the inevitable pathos and bathos side by side and the conventional rise to an emotional break in the last act. The thing could not have been endured had not Gabrielle Winton been such as to make for utter disregard of everything except her own charm of personality. Hers the greater triumph in that the vehicle of her acting was so signally crude! There was that in her rich, low voice, in her grace of line and perfect poise that satisfied the most critical artist; there was that in her emotional acting that swayed with potency the more subtle, because it was chastened to an almost classic purity.

She was beautiful, but her spell lay not in her beauty, rather in the humanity of her. "The humanity of her!" Yes, that was it. Some critic had stumbled upon the phrase in the beginning of her career and even now, after she had run a two years' course of unprecedented success, changes were still being rung on the same expression.

Jimmy Treadwell came to the fore at the end of the first act and did what was expected of him.

"She's so—so human, isn't she?" he said, giving forth dutifully the applause necessary to the occasion.

Lili sat perfectly still. She had been watching Gabrielle with a tensity of interest and closeness of scrutiny that allowed nothing to escape it.

"Is she?" she said at last. "A remarkable actress, certainly. But—human, do you think?" Her voice tapered to a point, gracefully suggestive.

Then, shaking her head. "No, she's too perfect! Humanity makes for flaws!"

Mrs. Jimmy didn't see it and protested with some show of incoherent logic, which Lili languidly ignored. The only answer she would vouchsafe was a shrug and a murmured "*Mon Dieu!* The deadliness of perfection!"

Mrs. Jimmy clinched the matter at that to her way of thinking.

"You're not consistent, Lili," she said with fine scorn and deliberately turned her back.

"But why be consistent when you can be charming?" interpolated Gordon.

"Thank you!" whispered Lili with a sweet look of grateful understanding. "The thing in a nutshell! She"—indicating the stage that was just being disclosed for the second act, "*is* consistent; she would be, always. And so—what could she know of real love?"

"But—" and here Lili again sighed deeply as her eyes rested on Gabrielle, who had just made her entrance. "She *is* beautiful!"

III

GEORGE FLETCHER had lived the usual life of the average New York society man up to the age of thirty-five—this in spite of an equipment of idea and expectation very different from the average. For Fletcher had started out with the preconceived idea of life as a thing that gripped and held, a thing of perpetual dilemmas and passionate problems. He had wanted, intensely wanted, it to be that way, so that he might try out the mettle of him in the furnace of seething event.

The almost unctuous ease of his first few years out of college had brought a questioning surprise that deepened to disappointment as time went blandly on; nothing really worth while ever happened, and there gradually settled the conviction that nothing really worth while ever would. He travelled extensively, loved indifferently, and in the end became infinitely bored. Life seemed to offer so little that was really genuine.

Was it, Fletcher often asked himself, that the very tradition of what his class stood for precluded the elemental force necessary to drive life into a corner, to deliberately front its essential facts? Or was it there *were* no essential facts of life? That what loomed large, as of fundamental importance, on the horizon of the future, assumed petty proportions when met in the present?

His first love-affair! He smiled always as he recalled it. He had expected glorious reality, frank freedom. It resolved itself merely into a gossamer interplay of artifice and deft avoidance of anything approaching real passion. The thing that stood out most clearly in his mind, after the matter was ended, was the daintiness and variety of the lady's négligés. This, the gauge of an emotion he had expected to grip him with all the immensity and intensity of love as a full experience!

The pendulum had swung to the opposite extreme with the result of a second affair, that with a woman of the coarsest grain. He hated it. He weighed crude lack of finesse against the inadequacy of artificiality and despaired of compromise. The tragedy of Fletcher's problem was that, born with perhaps a larger share than usual of elemental cravings, he was still too much the æsthetic by training and education to tolerate an experience, the primordial force of which precluded beauty and form. He wanted nature, nature refined without being devitalized.

He had wanted to marry always, and had started out at an early age with that end in view. His quest for the right woman had ended in disillusion, to the setting in of an apathy that came

to take for granted the hopelessness and futility of the sex question in general, of his own in particular.

Lili Whitelaw had interested him through her delightful inconsequence. She had a tricky intelligence and sparkling wit that were more or less refreshing, considering the number of women who had neither. She was pretty with a charming prettiness that frankly confessed to the artifices of a maid. Artifice! That was the keynote to Lili's nature, but she carried her artificiality with such a graceful ease that it verged surprisingly near the most ingenuous naturalness.

Fletcher's flirtation with Lili might have followed the usual line of least resistance had it not been for the arrival of Gabrielle Winton. The appearance of the young English star in the New York firmament was well timed—that is, as far as Fletcher was concerned. For, it would seem that Lili had paved the way, as it were, for the new arrival by a very contrast of values. In her artificial frivolity she proved a most excellent foil for the more substantial qualities of Gabrielle.

Fletcher and Lili had run to delicate innuendoes, charming, provocative, illusive; it was with a keener sense of relief, therefore, that he turned to a real friendship, built on a sound basis of understanding and sympathy and that showed promise of even deeper development.

He had met Gabrielle Winton at a dinner soon after her arrival in this country. It was the usual dinner at the usual Fifth Avenue restaurant, financed by some man of wealth in the interest of a fair one of the footlights. It was different only in that Gabrielle, though merely one of the guests of the occasion, seemed to control the morale of the party with the result of a brilliancy that never erred to vulgarity or offended in the slightest way the rules of good taste. Fletcher enjoyed the dinner more than any other he could recall and determined to see more of the woman who, in spite of overwhelming odds, had so set the tone of it.

The next night he went to see the play in which she was acting, and at the end of the performance found himself in the grip of the passion he had been waiting for all his life, a passion so intense there was left no doubt at all in his mind as to the eventual outcome of it.

Gabrielle must be his wife. She possessed that rare combination of qualities he had long been seeking. She was elemental in her emotions, but of a finished personality that was yet not art but nature. She seemed the more precious find in that she had come to him after he had long since despaired of any experience worth while. Be it said for the purity of the emotion Gabrielle inspired, that Fletcher never for an instant thought of offering anything less than marriage. That Gabrielle could take her place in his own set gracefully and without question he did not doubt; it was only what she might think of the superficiality of that set that brought him pause.

Gabrielle's opposition to his proposal of marriage came not as a surprise; the value of a thing is sometimes measured by the difficulties involved in acquiring it. It was to Gabrielle's credit that she hesitated; the eventual yielding would be the sweeter. So he awaited in all good faith the moment that would see the fruition of his plans and the consummation of his dearest hopes.

It wasn't until his talk with Lili the night before the theatre party that he came to realize that his attentions to Gabrielle might be misconstrued to the jeopardizing of her good name. He saw now that the very openness of his devotion, that he had always considered a guarantee of square dealing, was being interpreted simply as reckless defiance of opinion. The matter as presented in that light startled him; definite action must be taken at once.

Lili had said nothing directly; she implied much. Lili could always imply things with a sophisticated *naïveté*, the very intangibility of her implication precluding any counter attack.

Her confidential "Why don't you

marry her, George?" had cast a reflection on Gabrielle, that Fletcher had hastened to combat with "But I have asked her a hundred times and she has refused!"

Lili had raised her brows with delicate incredulity, but in no way altered her original hypothesis that opposition on the girl's part was absurd, the question resolving itself entirely in the last analysis into one of George's condescension.

"I must go to see her," Lili had announced finally. "No, I never have. Which theatre?"

The tone might have implied the consideration of a new Pekinese or race horse, with the possible view of a purchase in mind.

Fletcher was angry, still more so when he realized Lili had provoked him into an actual apology for the poor production Gabrielle was playing in. He cut himself short and rose to go.

"To get away from the red tape of Broadway would be a relief for any decent woman," Lili had finally announced with a show of virtuous indignation at the wrongs inflicted upon her sisters of the footlights.

"But she doesn't want to get away—" Fletcher started to protest almost angrily.

Then, seeing his mistake:

"Go to see her, Lili," he said. "She's beautiful, very beautiful and good."

"To-morrow night!" Lili had murmured as they parted.

It was with a feeling of irritability, however, that Fletcher recognized the box party that next night. He had thought during the day that he himself would not go to the theatre as had been his custom nightly ever since Gabrielle's new show had opened. Then, realizing his failure to appear might be deemed in the nature of a concession to Lili and her curiosity, he decided to go as usual. It was not that he feared Gabrielle would fail to qualify; it was, rather, that it seemed a sacrilege to have the beauty and purity of the woman he loved submitted to the criticism of a set of worldings, incapable of appreciation of sterling worth.

It seemed to Fletcher as the evening advanced that Gabrielle had never before given a more perfect performance. He lost all consciousness of Lili and her party, of the people about him, of the stage, and gave himself to the potent spell of this woman he desired so intensely to make his own.

He breathed a deep sigh as the curtain went down on the last act, shutting her so blackly from his vision. The lights brought reality. One glance at the gay party leaving the box and the determination was forged grimly to force an issue with Gabrielle that night.

"This way—she belongs to everybody," he murmured, forced to listen to the general comment on the way out.

As he came out into the lobby, still in a daze of emotion and conflicting thoughts, he encountered Lili's party. There was a moment of embarrassed uncertainty.

"Jolly performance!" said Bert Whitelaw with happy selection of adjective.

"Miss Winton is charming!" pronounced Mrs. Jimmy with condescension.

Fletcher's eyes sought Lili's in spite of himself.

"A perfect actress!" she said.

That was all, but the phrase haunted. It seemed somehow but a strange echo of his own thought of a minute before.

"This way—she belongs to everybody."

IV

GABRIELLE WINTON came of a family the theatrical success of which had long been a tradition in England. Gabrielle's father had been, perhaps, the greatest of the Wintons in that he had been actuated in his career purely by the desire of promulgating the best in his art, and of bringing about a higher standard of drama. He had died at an early age leaving his mission unfulfilled, but with the confident hope

that his daughter would carry it on to success.

Gabrielle had been trained from childhood for the stage; no other alternative had ever presented itself. At her father's death she took up the responsibility that he had laid down with a full sense of the seriousness of it.

Her career had been tragic, in that little by little she had been obliged to sacrifice her father's principles and ideals of art to the demands of her managers. She had started out to play the classic drama; from brute force of necessity she was condemned to the rankest of melodramas.

Her beauty and charm were a handicap, as, in theatrical circles, beauty and charm invariably are unless commercialized. But she clung to her moral principles, not suffering them to be battered down as had been her dramatic ideals, and continued to struggle on until by dint of her real worth as an emotional actress success had become hers. That is, the success that means crowded houses and flaunts itself on lurid billboards, success which Gabrielle accounted no success at all.

She soon sickened of the éclat of her so-called London triumphs, for those triumphs seemed always a painful reminder of the tenets she had sacrificed in the achieving of her notoriety.

After the death of her mother, she came to America with the object of beginning over again in a new field. Her fame had preceded her, of course; the New York managers laughed when she talked of changing her line. The result was inevitable; it was impossible to hold out against these men who lived and dreamed and had their being entirely in terms of box office receipts. To yield seemed less a sacrilege of her ideals than to try to bring those ideals down to the level of their little understanding.

So Gabrielle continued in her old order of rôle with the result of her immediate success on Broadway. It would have been better for her, perhaps, had she been obliged to win it more hardly, for she was of a nature that enjoyed a struggle against odds. Better a struggle for something than the easy conquest of it, no matter how worthless the thing intrinsically! If the end must be a worthless one, at least let there be a certain stimulation involved in the effort to achieve it.

Thus it was her easy triumph bored her. The people with whom she came in contact offered no inspiration and she soon resigned herself to a state of restless discontent.

She, too, had often thought of marriage and considered it the only happy solution of every woman's existence. But the men who seek out the popular actress are not of the type to meet the demands of a woman like Gabrielle. She looked for understanding; she found only a superficial sex interest.

George Fletcher was the first man to come into her life who measured to her standard. She recognized at once his fineness of fibre, the ready intelligence, the quick sympathy. She recognized also that she stood in his eyes as an individual embodiment of an ideal rather than as merely a pretty woman to dally with. The relation seemed rich in promise; Gabrielle gave herself up to the full experience of it with a sense of restful security as of a long sought goal at last attained.

At the end of a year, however, though gauging the just measure of their friendship, that was the stronger for a certain slowness necessary to natural development, she realized with a protest that the essential spark that makes for love as it should exist between a man and a woman had not been kindled. Why?

The question haunted continually. It was not because of any disparity of ideas or lack of identification of interests. It was not because Fletcher had failed to satisfy her every demand of what a man should be. It was, in short, nothing she could bring down to definite analysis. It was rather a vague intangible feeling, instinct perhaps, that the difference in their stations precluded that intimate association, that giving of self without reservation, of

which only could passion, in a nature like Gabrielle's, be begotten.

There is necessarily and always an antagonism of class, and those misclassed are more truly the victims of it. This was true of Gabrielle. Knowing herself, and with no degree of conceit, finer than the women of Fletcher's own set, yet, perforce accident of circumstance, placed without, she fought down any impulse that might argue a yielding of ground to the traditions of that set. It was, so to speak, a sort of inverted snobbery, and Fletcher was the unfortunate victim. She had refused his first proposal on the grounds of her career. He had taken it gently, courteously, though with an indication that the subject was not definitely closed.

Six months later he renewed the offer; this time she told him she did not love him.

"But why?" he protested. "We are out to love each other."

"Yes, I know," she admitted. "I want to love you, to marry you. It would be quite the happiest solution for me—"

"I might undertake to alter myself, even radically—" he persisted.

But she shook her head. "The fault isn't with you. It's—well, honestly, I don't know."

She turned her deep eyes full upon him and he could read the struggle and uncertainty in their shadows.

"It's—it's tragic," she faltered.

Then they smiled into each other's eyes with one of their quick appreciations of a situation truly absurd.

"No more of it, to-night," she had said lightly, and the subject had been dropped.

Not the least evidence of what Fletcher's love of Gabrielle had done for him was his steady optimism in the face of discouragement, an optimism that worked to the conviction that everything *had* to come out all right. His love was too big and beautiful a thing to be denied fruition. Time only was necessary to bring about the desired end.

His talk with Lili had been the first disturbing element. Her covert sneer at Gabrielle had hurt the more in that it was so unjustifiable. It succeeded, however, in leaving its taint, in arousing in Fletcher's mind a bitter resentment that the woman he loved so much should be in a position not only to suffer the dictates of intriguing managers but also that she should be obliged to expose herself to the general criticism of the crowd to which she presented herself each night.

He had never thought of the matter in this light before. Gabrielle's art he had taken as an essential part of her and had thrilled night after night to her glorious acting. If he had realized her spell was for others, too, as well as for himself, he would, doubtless, have set it down, without a tinge of jealousy, entirely to the broad humanity she represented. As absurd to be jealous of Gabrielle that way as of the summer moon or a gorgeous winter sunset!

Yet, this particular night, with Lili and her party there in the box—Jimmy Treadwell and the dissolute Gordon Cowdrey—things assumed a different aspect. That Gabrielle should be giving herself to these was humiliating, the more so that the play, the vehicle through which she was forced to express herself, was so unquestionably cheap.

But Gabrielle, as we have said, had never before done herself greater justice in her acting, and all Fletcher's little doubts and petty irritations were soon dispelled in the wonder of her beauty as he gazed upon her. Each time, however, that he was shut away from her by the long sweep of the curtain, his general uneasiness returned.

Lili's very pointed remark, "A perfect actress," had seemed the last humiliation. For who was Lili to criticise one way or the other, to pass judgment, to—

Fletcher was forced to wait some time for Gabrielle.

"Another altercation with the man-

ager," she had explained, sighing slightly as in surrender to fatigue.

Once ensconced in the motor, Fletcher let all the emotion that had been pent in his being for so long rush forth in a great plea. It was all so different from the carefully calculated precision of his other avowals.

He made her see the more vividly for the very incoherence of his words the greatness of this love she had kindled in him, the import of it in the moulding of his Destiny.

"I love you. I love you so," he kept reiterating till Gabrielle felt herself stirred whether from sheer contact with the force of his passion or from an emotion born in her own heart, she did not know.

He saw that she was trembling and read for the first time hope in her hesitancy. He quieted himself a little.

"Ah, Gabrielle! I want to take you out of all this. I want you for myself. This way, you are exposed to worry, forced to bicker with your managers. You—you belong to everybody, everybody who pays his price of admission."

Their eyes met, and in a second Fletcher realized he had erred, had lost the hard-earned advantage of the moment previous. What was it? The warmth in her eyes had faded, that warmth in which he had read her yielding.

She stiffened a little and turned away. "We are here," she said quietly, as the motor slowed down at Sherry's.

But even as Fletcher was protesting and struggling to grasp the inexplicable something that had come between them, they had stepped out of the car and were being obsequiously escorted by the lackey to the door.

"We can finish the discussion inside," Gabrielle had said.

Once inside, however, it was very difficult to pick up the threads of the scene enacted in the close warmth of the limousine. They touched the casual for a few minutes with a variety of comment in regard to the people at the neighbouring tables.

Then, with Fletcher's last words in the motor clearly the point of departure, Gabrielle said as she met his eyes unflinchingly:

"Lili Whitelaw is very beautiful."

"How did you recognize her?" asked Fletcher.

"I've seen her about—at the Opera, in restaurants. Besides, her picture is constantly in the papers—"

There was a pause.

Fletcher leaned forward with a sudden impulse.

"Do you know what they're saying, Gabrielle? What—"

"Then you *have* talked me over with her."

The words were said with a crisp incisiveness, as if in corroboration of a doubt that had for some time been troubling. It was, somehow, in the nature of an admission that startled Gabrielle herself as well as Fletcher. It was the first time she had given evidence of realizing he had any existence apart from that he shared with her.

Gabrielle's eyes showed strange depths as Fletcher looked into them in a hesitancy, prompted by surprise rather than indecision, as to his answer.

"Well, yes," he said. "Lili herself dragged the subject in last night."

"Oh!" was her only answer. But the vibration of the low voice, tense with an emotion curbed up short, brought to Fletcher, lightning-like, insight into the real nature of Gabrielle's lack of response to his love. He had acted on his intuition before he realized it.

"So *that's* it!" he had said. "You will not marry me, you cannot love me, because there's—there's that—"

Both realized, as they hung mute for a second, probing each other's eyes, that they were about to face at last the vital point of the issue, that subterfuge and evasion must needs give way at the present crisis to the honest desire to get at the real truth of the situation.

"What?" Gabrielle had barely articulated.

"Because there's that inexplicable, intangible something of class that holds us apart, an innate jealousy, a pride

that will not yield. Oh! I cannot explain it. Another woman would have taken me for what I could give her. *You* would take me in honestly, only, and you cannot honestly love me, Gabrielle—don't you see? Marry me, and that antagonism of class will be overcome. You and I together, living the same life, all that would be obliterated then. You could grow to love me, as, this way, you never could. Gabrielle, you will never find another man to offer you as big, as perfect a love as I offer you. I have lived my whole life in preparation for this."

Gabrielle listened with wide, tense eyes. The realization that Fletcher had grasped the truth that had so long eluded her brought in its trail a quick resentment, the keener in that she knew it as unjustifiable. He was right; it was a class antagonism that kept her from giving in, but that antagonism was in no way lessened by the fact that it had been brought to open discussion.

"You mean," she said, and her mellow voice seemed to harden in its very attempt to be natural, "You mean you think I'm afraid that I wouldn't qualify in *your* set."

Fletcher's brows contracted quickly.

"Gabrielle!" he cried, and there was genuine pain in his voice.

She did not need his protest to teach her the pettiness of the remark, but once started, she clung to her viewpoint.

"Well—what else?" she persisted.

He covered his disappointment, but she felt it notwithstanding.

"You know you would qualify, as I know you would qualify. I was taking the subject generally—"

"And I was crude enough to make particular application—" She put in with no attempt to conceal the bitterness in her tone.

Fletcher sighed. "After all, it is the way of women, and you, Gabrielle, are so essentially a woman—" He smiled a little. "I want you to be that way—little weaknesses and all—"

She ignored his endeavour to strike a lighter vein.

"Well," she said at last. 'Im not afraid. I *would* qualify. Put me beside Lili Whitelaw—"

Again Fletcher frowned. "As I said before, there's no doubt in my mind—"

"If there is in others?" she finished quickly.

"I wasn't going to say that," he said decisively. "Gabrielle, what is the matter? You are different to-night."

But she was thinking deeply and did not hear him.

"I would almost marry you," she said at last, "to prove to those others—Lili Whitelaw and the rest of that box party that came to look me over so insolently—to prove to them I *could* stand the test, that I could—"

Her voice broke and tears came to her eyes as she realized the absurdity of her bravado.

"I want to go home," she said and rose hurriedly.

In the motor Fletcher took her in his arms. It was the first time. He had dreamed of this happening so many times, wanted it so often; now that it had come there seemed an irony involved in that he must needs force himself to look upon her as he would look upon a child to be comforted. He held her quietly as she cried out her weakness on his shoulder.

"I am tired, so tired!" she said wearily at last as she roused herself. "That is my only excuse."

That was all. As she said goodnight at the door she faltered, as if with a tremulous desire to touch again the subject so vital to them both.

"In a month," she had said and the words seemed to cost her an effort she was hardly capable of. "In a month we will talk it over again."

"For the last time!" he had put in quickly.

Their eyes met, a certain pain in hers, decision in his.

"I owe that at least to myself, don't you think so?" he added kindly.

"Yes," she admitted weakly. "Yes." Then, as if feeling something more

were expected of her, she smiled up at him wanly as she said. "I feel as if I had been playing the heavy rôle in a melodrama."

He laughed as he pressed her hand. Then she left him.

V

As Fletcher looked back upon the scene that night with Gabrielle, his first slight disappointment that she had narrowed things down to a personal basis gave way to a great tenderness for her just because she had done so. That feminine unreason, provoked by jealousy, showed a phase of her that, as his mind dwelt upon it, came to hold for him a strange lure that her days of poise and perfect dignity had never held. She had given way to her tears so artlessly; she had accepted his comfort so simply. It was all just a part of that great naturalness of hers that would not compromise with pretence. She had been weak, but had not shrunk from confessing her weakness. She was, in this new guise, so essentially the woman to be loved, protected, caressed. The appeal was a physical one, perhaps, but none the less potent for that.

He thought of the words that seemed to have come from her almost without her own consciousness of them. "I would marry you to prove to the others I could stand the test." This brought him reflection; it had so showed the accuracy of his gauge of that class feeling he must set about to overcome.

To have clearly defined what it is one has to combat makes for a certain confidence that has much to do with bringing about the ultimate victory. So it was with Fletcher; he set about the task, as presented to him in the light of his new reading of Gabrielle's character, with a feeling of relief, as of one who, having struggled blindly on in the dark finds himself at last in the open with the goal in sight.

With Gabrielle it was quite different. The recognition of the truth of what Fletcher had said had strangely complicated her problem. All her life she had been involved in one struggle or another, but always it was she herself against some outside force. As in the case of her managers it was her force against theirs. That she had been beaten, been obliged to sacrifice her tenets to theirs had cost her sorrow. But she had had always the consciousness that she had fought a good fight, and satisfaction in the wholeness of her purpose.

She faced the present crisis with a feeling of terror because she realized the warring elements were within herself. On the one hand, there was her pride that forbade absolutely her yielding. On the other, was weak uncertainty, together with a foolish bravado that accounted marriage itself as the nicest kind of defiance. But behind it all, there was another mood waiting to be dealt with, a mood of immense despair, despair that the thing she wanted so intensely had come at last, but come so trailed with other complications she was afraid to meet it.

Fletcher, as he had poured forth chaotically his appeal to her, had stirred her as in his former deferential love-making he had failed to do. Her sudden startling realization of this had reduced her to a panic; the tears had been the inevitable result. And, odd as it would seem, though harbouring bitterly resentment against him for his open discussion of class, she knew that above everything else she had wanted him to kiss her as he held her close.

The day after the scene at Sherry's, Gabrielle had received a note from Fletcher, stating that he was going away on business and would not return for several weeks. She took from the note just what she was intended to. Fletcher wished to free her of his presence as much as possible during the period in which she was making up her mind. It was his way of playing fair; Gabrielle would have preferred, perhaps, to have had him less scrupulous. The problem loomed the bigger in the abstract.

A note from Helen Stewart, Fletcher's sister, received a few days later,

rendered the situation still more complicated. Gabrielle recognized Fletcher's hand in the matter. It was his way of tacitly expressing the confidence he had in her that she would qualify anywhere. He was giving her the opportunity of demonstrating her fitness to move in any circle.

Helen Stewart stood for the best of New York Society. Her set was the ultra conservative one that still held to the old traditions of stern morality and fine breeding. She herself was the whole souled type of woman whose sphere is distinctly the home. Married at an early age, she had consciously limited her interests. Her husband Phil, her children five and her brother George—these made up her life.

Her deepest regret had been that George had not proved amenable to matrimonial suggestions; many a well-laid scheme and systematic campaign she had been obliged to forego in face of his persistent obduracy. She had watched him drift to the fast set and then drift with it for years, but she had said nothing.

The rumour of his attachment to a denizen of the footlights, however, had brought a dismay that had threatened to become panicky. The silence was broken, with the result of a comfortable talk between brother and sister that had quite restored their old-time attitude of intimacy and confidence. Helen from that time on followed the matter with interest.

"The girl is perfectly good, of fine breeding. So why not?" she had announced positively to her husband afterwards. "Better that than flirting with women like Lili Whitelaw!"

Gabrielle's refusal of Fletcher when he duly offered himself had brought an amazed resentment to Helen, which merged later on to a tender gratitude.

"The girl, doubtless, is doing it for his sake," she had decided. "Thinks we object. I wish I could do something in the matter—"

So it was that Helen was ready to act immediately when Fletcher suggested that she ask Gabrielle to tea. The note was couched in terms that made either acceptance or refusal gracefully possible. For Helen, though wishing genuinely to help, wanted in no way to put the girl in an embarrassing position or to force an issue.

"If she comes because she wants to, then we'll be better friends," she had concluded.

Gabrielle wished, however, as she weighed the matter in her mind, that the note had been less skilfully worded; she would like to have felt refusal impossible. For the idea of going voluntarily seemed to argue a concession to Fletcher's suit that she was not at all prepared to make. On the other hand, not to go would be in the nature of a concession, too, a concession to the class the Fletchers and Stewarts represented.

To go and steer midchannel seemed in the end the most expedient.

This consciousness of what she was to do, quite foreign to her open nature and simple method of procedure, caused Gabrielle to adopt in her meeting with Helen a reserve most unnatural to her, although it in no way obscured her charm. The effect produced was that of a part perfectly played. The contralto voice was as mellow and rich as usual, the grace of bearing as lovely, the manner as finished.

What was it then, Helen kept asking herself, that failed to convince? Was it that Gabrielle failed of spontaneity? Was it— But it was hardly fair to judge. The finer the girl's grain, the more keenly must she feel the ordeal of this meeting. At any rate, her gentility was beyond question, her beauty a joy; all in all, Helen was pleased and was already formulating in her mind the very words with which she could express her approval to George.

Twenty minutes after Gabrielle had arrived, Lili Whitelaw was announced. Lili was a distant relative of Phil's, but she and Helen had very sensibly made no pretence of keeping up even a casual acquaintance.

Lili breezed into the drawing-room,

however, quite without explanation, and greeted her hostess with affectionate effusion.

Helen showed herself very much at sea. It was only when Lili turned to Gabrielle with her delicate brows arched questioningly that she got the full force of the manœuvre. Lili had tricked this meeting.

"Ah, Miss Winton! It can't be really. What a happy surprise! I had no idea—"

Her eyes met Helen's and she smiled.

Part of Lili's efficiency lay in the fact that, caught by anyone in a lie or an intrigue, she could, by an all-embracing smile of understanding, make of that person a partisan in her guilt.

So now with Helen. She seemed in spite of herself enrolled on the side of this scheming woman against her guest, who seemed at once to realize her disadvantage as she rose and faced them. It was, to all appearances, so unfairly two to one.

"Mrs. Whitelaw!" murmured Helen, and Gabrielle bent her head gracefully in recognition of the introduction.

There was a pause, during which the two women looked steadily into each other's eyes.

Then Lili broke the silence with a deep sigh.

"Ah!" she cried. "I love you just that way. You don't mind my saying it? It's just that pose that stayed with me the other night after the play. It's —it's wonderful!"

Gabrielle drew herself up in all dignity. There was genuine pain in her eyes as she hesitated just how to meet this thrust.

Helen rushed in, in an attempt to cover the situation decently.

"But Miss Winton's poses are so natural," she said.

Gabrielle had recovered herself now and smiled at Helen's blunder.

Lili showed herself with a certain puzzled expression in her blue eyes.

"But I don't understand. You mean you don't like people to admire you?" she asked with innocent wonder.

Gabrielle met this with "I mean I consider myself perfectly natural, off the stage as on," and then hated herself for the stiff banality of it.

"Oh!" was Lili's only comment. Then, after a moment's reflection, "You *will* forgive my outburst then. It's because I'm natural, too, that I spoke right out. I have admired you so much and thought if I told you so it would at once—oh, don't you see?—put you at your ease."

Gabrielle made no attempt to conceal her annoyance this time.

"Put me at my ease?" she said, and her words gained force from the restraint she put upon her rich voice. "But why shouldn't I be at my ease always? Here? Anywhere?"

Lili evaded this. Shaking her head, she murmured sadly:

"I have blundered again, I am afraid."

Gabrielle rose and turned to Helen to make her adieux. Helen showed herself plainly ill at ease at the turn affairs had taken, with the result that her over-cordial invitation to come again rang false.

Lili refused to be left out. She had risen, too, and with a supreme effort that was positively heroic in its attempt to sound the note of fair and square dealing, she said.

"Miss Winton, in some way I have offended you. I can only ask that you forgive my crudeness. Will you?"

"Of course!" said Gabrielle.

Lili put out her hand. "To show you really meant it, will you let me come to tea with *you* some day?"

It was a challenge that Gabrielle could not help but take.

"Set your own time," she had said.

The two left together, as Lili was obliged to run on somewhere for bridge.

"Can I take you home in my motor?" she had queried sweetly as they went down the stairs.

"No, thank you. I have my own," answered Gabrielle and then reddened as her car, conspicuous for its lines and luxury, drew up before the curb. She would have preferred open accusation

on the part of Lili to the delicate suggestion implied in her attitude as she scanned the outfit with the obvious view of appraising its value. Gabrielle could with difficulty bring herself to the point of murmuring a polite goodbye.

Lili watched the footman in all deference open the door and help Gabrielle settle herself comfortably. Then with a mocking smile in her blue eyes, she waved her hand lightly.

"Adieu!" she cried and turned smilingly away.

VI

HELEN'S note to her brother was not so easy a matter as she had anticipated. She wanted so much to be honest; they had agreed to be honest. She hated to worry him, however, with an account of Mrs. Whitelaw's intrusion. It had been an intrusion, but, apart from the impoliteness involved, had no particular bearing on the matter in hand. For, after all, who was Lili, to count one way or another?

She compromised in the end by omitting entirely the Lili incident but by going into greater details as to Gabrielle. That her praise might ring the truer, she qualified it in a postscript.

"The only possible criticism that could be made, George dear, is that she is not quite natural, gives, rather, the impression of forever playing a rôle."

VII

A WEEK later, Lili by her own arrangement took tea with Gabrielle. She insisted upon looking about with naive delight at everything in the well-appointed room, making no excuse whatever for her curiosity. Her interest in the neat little maid who served passed all bounds; so absorbed was she in her every move she quite lost the thread of the conversation. Her apology was innocently frank.

"But you can't know the relief of getting into a *different* atmosphere," she had explained.

She drank three cups of tea with the relish of a child who tastes for the first time the pink lemonade of circus tents.

Gabrielle was faintly amused. It was perfectly good tea; of tea at least she knew herself a connoisseur. So Lili's extravagant praise failed of its purpose there.

By the time she was ready to leave, however, Lili had managed to convey to her hostess just what she wished to convey—that the afternoon had been delightful in that it had been an *experience*. "Exactly the attitude I would have taken in regard to doing Chinatown or the Bowery!"

Gabrielle smiled vaguely when it was all over and continued to look fixedly into the fire. What *was* Lili's game? It came back every time to that. She felt tired, irritable; Lili had accomplished that, at any rate.

Of one thing Gabrielle was certain, the end Lili had in view, however puzzling the means by which she meant to bring that end about. She was in love with George and meant to prevent his marriage; that much was clear. To that end, she had tried to belittle Gabrielle at every turn, tried, by emphasizing the difference in atmosphere, to fan the class antagonism she had in the beginning sensed in Gabrielle's nature.

Yet again, could it be Lili was one of those who thought George the reluctant one? And had she come to laugh, mockingly, as only she could laugh?

Two other times Gabrielle saw Lili. Once they met after a matinee accidentally and went to the Ritz to tea. The following week Gabrielle had gone to Lili's for luncheon. The results of these meetings were signal in the shaping of Gabrielle's final decision. She came away bewildered, angry, revengeful. But the more she hated Lili with her tricky scheming and false flattery, the more she found herself turning to the thought of Fletcher with a great

tenderness for his bigness and frankness of dealing. It seemed as if she had needed just the sort of uncertainty and distrust Lili had succeeded in arousing in her to make her appreciate the breadth of understanding and unswerving devotion that Fletcher had always given her.

All the petty opposition she had felt toward him seemed incomprehensible now that it was merged in a great longing for his return.

"You and I living the same life together—"

His words came back to her; that was what she needed, what she wanted. She was lonely, tired of struggling by herself. She wanted to rest in the love of this man, the full beauty of whose love she might never have understood, had it not been for the opposition of another woman.

Yes, she would marry Fletcher, prove to Lili Whitelaw— But what difference did it make what she proved to Lili, now that she had come into the true recognition of the thing that would make always for her happiness?

She received a note from Fletcher, stating the day of his return. She was in a fever of excitement as she waited for him, although the outward calm of her belied the tumult of her emotions. She was standing by the fireplace as he came into the room. She made no move to go to him, but he read her message in the light of her eyes. They stood so a full minute as if the consummation of their happiness were too great to be taken without an intensity of preparation. Then Fletcher put out his arms and Gabrielle with a sharp intake of her breath came to him.

VIII

It was arranged that the marriage was to take place in about a fortnight, and was to be followed by an extended tour in Europe. The trip had been Gabrielle's suggestion, one that Fletcher had welcomed eagerly. New York seemed to hold too much that was problematic for the spring of the year. Besides, each wanted a certain length of time, unhampered by social obligations, in which to learn, in so far as was possible, the other. There was a general calm about it that argued well for future understanding. The two met day by day, talked and enjoyed the little details of arrangement the more keenly because they were shared with no one. Even Helen had not been taken into confidence.

What had taken place during Fletcher's three weeks' absence he had never asked; the results had been so much to his satisfaction that he had omitted to look into the means that had brought them about. He had never opened the subject with either Gabrielle or Helen. Gabrielle's sudden yielding seemed the more precious in that it was surrounded by a certain mystery; their marriage seemed the more sacred in that the secret of it was not to be shared.

The night before it was to take place, Fletcher was sitting in his library, disposing of some business matters, when his man announced that a lady wished to see him. His first thought was Gabrielle, with surprise that she should venture there and a slight annoyance. Something very urgent must have prompted, of course.

"Gabrielle!" he said as he saw a slight figure in the doorway, and started forward with outstretched hands.

A light laugh brought him up short.

"Oh, Lili!" he exclaimed. "I beg your pardon—in the dim light— Won't you sit down?"

She dropped into the corner of a divan, her sable cloak a dusky background for her golden hair.

"Don't apologize," she said. "Naturally, the night before your wedding—" She smiled up at him.

He drew a chair by the divan.

"Do you mind if I smoke?" he asked, and gave the lighting of his cigarette elaborate care.

Then—

"How did you know?" he asked quietly.

Lili wrinkled her brows into a semblance of thought.

"Helen!" she brought out at last.

Fletcher shook his head.

"Well, Gabrielle herself then!" she said with a tinge of defiance in her tone.

Fletcher looked at her coolly. "You—"

"Go on!" she said.

Her mention of Gabrielle had had the desired effect; Fletcher was obviously annoyed.

"You are lying," he said and then smiled to break the effect of his words.

"Are you advancing that as a new discovery, George!" she asked sweetly, "or talking platitudes to kill time?"

He let this go. "But tell me, really—" he persisted.

"Very well, to satisfy your curiosity," she said magnanimously. "I saw your car outside the shipping office and took occasion to inquire later—"

She looked to him for appreciation of her strategy, and found it in the amusement in his eyes.

"Ah! Now we're getting down to it," he said. "And you very thoughtfully came to-night to wish me happiness, tender a little advice possibly."

They smiled at each other. It was surprising how much ground Lili could cover in a short time.

"Ah! do get a more comfortable chair," she pleaded at last. "It gives me a mental headache to talk to you like that—that's better."

Fletcher drew up a big chair and settled himself comfortably. After all, why not? He owed it to himself to stalk Lili's game, whatever it might be. And besides, Lili did amuse. She keyed one up.

"Won't you take off your coat?" he asked as an after-thought. "No? It *is* too good a background to sacrifice—"

Lili flashed him a smile, then settled to an inconsistent seriousness.

"I came to-night to justify myself—in your eyes," she began very prettily.

Fletcher laughed his appreciation of this as a sally.

"You came to justify yourself for coming? Is that it? You can make a convincing argument of it, if any one can, Lili."

She shook her head sadly.

"I am serious for once, George. I want to justify myself as a woman who—who—"

He got what she was about to say from the winsome tenderness in her blue eyes.

He waved his hand as she hesitated. "Let that go, Lili," he protested.

"No," she said and managed to strike a note sombre with resignation. "As a woman who has loved you and has had the courage to give you to someone else, for your own good."

Fletcher looked at her shrewdly. "I don't follow," he said.

Lili met this heroically.

"George," she said slowly and deliberately, "*I* brought about this marriage."

Fletcher got at once the fact there *was* something underneath it all, but, considering his own vagueness as to what that something was, decided in favour of flippancy.

"Did you really?" he asked gaily. "Why, thank you so much."

"I told Gabrielle—" Lili went on.

He sat up straight at that.

"You've *seen* her?" he asked.

"Of course. Didn't she tell you? We've been running round together quite a bit since you went away. She had an idea, I think, which I encouraged for your sake, that I was trying to prevent the marriage, and so with true woman's perversity determined to pull it off."

It struck in, how deeply Fletcher tried to hide as he forced himself to meet Lili's mocking eyes.

"Then—in any case," he brought out at last with difficulty, "I am grateful to you."

He rose at that, as if to make an end of the interview. Lili rose too and came close to him.

"I did it for you," she said softly.

Fletcher allowed himself to get all the witchery of the eyes looking into

his. His anger softened in spite of himself. How clever she was!

"I don't believe it," he answered.

Lili sighed deeply.

"At any rate, I shall think of you on your honeymoon."

She looked into space fixedly for a moment. "I can see it all now," she said. "You remember the piece she played in two years ago."

"Then you *had* seen her before," he put in quickly, then realized how little subtle he was. Lili had meant that he should trap her.

She nodded. "I have seen her in everything she has ever played in—here, in London and Paris. So it is, I can follow you in every step of your married life."

Fletcher remained silent.

Lili continued to look into space with the rapt gaze of one in a trance, and her words came with a meditative softness.

"Ah! that love scene! It was so beautiful, so convincing! I have remembered it always. It was her wedding night. She was standing by the hearth, her whole face lighted with the fire in her eyes, her body aglow with the fire in the grate. And she put out her arms, her beautiful arms this way—"

Lili's voice broke and the tears came to her eyes. "I shall think of it—so," she faltered.

Fletcher had been standing perfectly still. A mingled feeling of rage and resentment choked him and he could not say a word. He felt himself go white from the sheer force he must needs use in the suppression of his feelings. He could have taken Lili and shaken her for the sacrilege of her imitation, for the viciousness of her every suggestion.

He turned away to steady himself, then turned back again, with sufficient poise to help her adjust her cloak.

"How long are you staying?" Lili asked, and the wistfulness of her tone showed she had understood his tacit rebuke.

"A year, possibly—"

Lili again let a sigh struggle up from somewhere.

"And you will come back playing the rôle of contented husband."

"It will not be a rôle," he put in quickly.

"But life is all a rôle, isn't it?" said Lili artlessly.

Fletcher shrugged. "Of course, if you look at it that way."

At the door she turned.

"Remember, I did it because I love you," she murmured.

"I don't believe it," he said again.

The only answer was her inimitable little laugh.

IX

THE first year of her married life brought to Gabrielle supreme contentment and a thankfulness for the right working out of her matrimonial experiment. For she realized, as time went on and she was able to get a clearer perspective of the events just preceding her marriage, that it *had* been an experiment prompted not only by her immediate jealousy of Lili, but by something that ran even deeper, the restlessness that had been fastening so surely upon her for years. What she had accounted as love for George in those weeks when she was bringing herself to decision was in reality but the stirring of a physical passion that might have worked out just as well to her destruction as to her happiness. It was by the love that had become hers in the end that she was brought to an appreciation of the precarious balance of the emotions that had swayed her in the first few months following her marriage. Her eventual security was the more satisfying for the realization of the dangers of that transition period. Her love for her husband was the bigger factor in her life because that love had cost her struggle.

The tour through Europe had been a desultory one, their vagaries proving fitful guides. They had lingered in quaint half-forgotten villages in the Esterelles for the most part, taking no

account of time except that its passage brought them closer together. The monotony of their life worked to the nicest possible adjustment of their natures and the last six months left them perfectly attuned, with a better understanding of life in general through their understanding of each other.

It was Gabrielle who had made the first suggestion that they go back to America. There had come to her at times the feeling as of one who wastes lavishly something precious. It was as if, in the absolute solitude in which they lived, there lurked the danger of consuming at too prodigal a rate their mutual affection. It was not that she feared the evanescence of her own love; that she knew now as too strong and full ever to pass away. It was not that she doubted her husband's love, that love that had so patiently educated hers to its own higher level. It was—well—she was not sure what it was. She would have been so supremely happy to go on always as they were, but she faced as inevitable the fact of their return.

"The need of the world of men—"

Did George feel that, in spite of his seeming content? If not yet, she must forestall such a future possibility. It was not for her to open herself to the criticism of wilfully cutting him off from all his old friends and former interests. Perhaps, after a year or so when they had tried out together that other phase of existence, they could come back again and take up the old idyll where they had left it. Take it up with a fuller sense of the permanence of its happiness!

Gabrielle had broached the subject one night after supper when they were standing on the terrace of their little villa at Castillane. Both had been thoughtful for some time with their eyes on the distant sunset that was yielding slowly to the twilight shadows.

Fletcher had turned suddenly with a sweep of emotion and taken Gabrielle in his arms.

"We are so happy," he had said simply as he kissed her.

There was a moment's silence as they rested so together. Then Gabrielle roused herself.

"Yes," she said in her low, mellow voice. "And it's because we are so happy I think, sometimes, we should go back—"

Fletcher looked at her quickly.

"Gabrielle!" he exclaimed. "You're not—"

"Tired of it?" She read his thought, and shook her head slowly. "I should like to go on this way always," she said, and he read her sincerity in the suppressed intensity of her tones and in the deep shadows of her eyes.

"Then why? Why?" he protested almost violently. "What is there for us over there?"

"It's because we *don't* know what there is that we should go back and face it. This way, I feel we're dodging—that our love is too closely guarded. Oh, I can't explain. It's an instinct, a reaching out to test ourselves by a big test just because our love *is* so big. And then—afterwards—we could come back—"

As Gabrielle spoke, she had drawn back a little. Her slender figure in its trailing black robe merged into the shadows of the terrace, and the low vibrations of her voice died away in the twilight stillness.

Fletcher had listened tensely, with a strained attention. But as Gabrielle put out her arms in the force of her appeal he gave a startled protest.

"No, no!" he cried, and taking a step forward crushed her almost roughly in his arms.

Then, as if to soften the effect of his violence, he raised her face to his and kissed her lightly on the lips.

"Perhaps! in the fall, my dear," he said. "But I'm not ready yet. Come, promise! No more of this to spoil our summer!"

She had promised in the end with a sigh.

"The sooner we get it over, the sooner we will be back," she had

pleaded, but he had laughed that argument away.

"In the fall, then!" she had said.

"In the fall!" he agreed, and they left it at that.

X

If the first few months of their married life had brought to Gabrielle a warring of emotion and a struggle for adjustment, they had brought to Fletcher an even deeper struggle. Deeper because the thing with which he had to contend was so trivial that he blamed himself the more bitterly for allowing it to interfere with the smoothness of the happiness he had succeeded with such difficulty in winning.

When Lili had said, "I shall follow every step of your married life," he had shrunk more from the fact that it pointed Lili's bad taste than from any idea of possible bearing it might have upon his own life. It wasn't until after Lili had left him that he realized the suggestion had entered in and left its taint. The more so as the picture she had so cleverly conjured up of Gabrielle in her love-making seemed indelibly stamped on his brain to the scattering of those gossamer fancies he had been weaving in all the vague tenderness of romance. It was as if a beautiful sunset, haunting in its evanescence and shadowy suggestion had been reduced to the crassness of a canvas daub.

So it was during the whole of the first few months after his marriage. He saw in Gabrielle's every move, in her every tender glance and low-voiced endearment but a repetition of herself in one or another of the plays in which she had acted. He knew the thing but a psychological trick, himself the victim of an evil suggestion. That he himself was spoiling the beauty of their relation maddened him the more in that he realized Gabrielle was in reality as natural and spontaneous, as worthy of his unqualified devotion, as ever. He even found himself at times calculating her next attitude, provoking an expected response and hated himself for the malpractice of it.

Helen's words came back to him laden with a deeper significance now. "It is as if she were forever playing a rôle." Had Helen sensed this strange quality in her, too? Could there, perhaps, after all be a justification of his attitude? But no! It was simply that Helen, like himself, had been the victim of Lili's insidious influence.

What brought him up short in the end was the evidence, slight though it was, that Gabrielle herself was not quite happy. He put this down at once to the fact that with her keen intuition she had sensed his covert criticism, so he set about from that time on with all the force and determination his nature was capable of to uproot this ugly thing that threatened to make for discord and discontent.

He succeeded in the end, Gabrielle's perfect happiness proving the incentive necessary. It was not, however, until after they had struck out from the beaten tourist path and were following at random the stray byways of the Esterelles.

Then, as he and Gabrielle lived day by day, side by side in simple communion of thought and feeling with no shadow of the outside world between them, Fletcher lost so entirely the sense of her acting that he marvelled it could ever have been. She was so natural, so simple in her beauty, so frankly companionable. They wandered about the country-side together hand in hand; they breakfasted in the freshness of the early morning under the yellow mimosas; they read and talked; Gabrielle sang and Fletcher listened, the clear tone of her voice a fit symbol of the perfect understanding that they had at last succeeded in making theirs.

The fact that the period of Fletcher's struggle coincided so exactly with that of Gabrielle's unhappiness argues the radical connection of the two. It may be the antagonism of class that Gabrielle nourished in her heart at the time of her marriage prompted a con-

sciousness of self that justified her husband's attitude. Or it may be Fletcher's covert criticism, because of the very fact of its injustice, roused in Gabrielle, when she sensed it, the opposition that wrought to her discontent. But whatever the first cause, the trouble worked itself out to a satisfactory ending, with the result of months of peace and contentment and a happy security in each other's love.

It had seemed to Fletcher that they must always go on this way; the perfection of their relation seemed its warrant for continuing without thought of change. Thus it was Gabrielle's suggestion that they go back to America startled him to an almost unreasoning resistance. The more so as there stirred in him that night, as she faced him in the half-shadows with her beautiful arms outstretched in her appeal, the old haunting doubt of Lili's vicious sowing.

"A perfect actress!" The words echoed in his brain. "I shall follow every step of your married life together."

With a pang he took her roughly in his arms and crushed her to him as if to crush out forever that quivering, disturbing suspicion. He had thought it dead, but the mention of the outside world proved it still a factor to be dealt with.

No, he was not yet ready to go back. He could not go back. So he wrested from her the promise to wait, with all the while a sense of guilt that she knew the reason of his hesitancy. She had mentioned a test; it was doubtless that she had in mind. It was for *his* sake, for *his* ultimate satisfaction—

And yet, was it really? Might there not be another side? Might not Gabrielle, with all her beauty and talent, feel a waste of energy there alone with him? Could a woman used to the compelling of hundreds, thousands, be content with the swaying of but one, and that one forever the same? Could the fealty, no matter how perfect, that she might exact from him, compensate for that broad range that up to a few months ago had made her life? And not only *her* life but the life of generations behind her! Might not Gabrielle all unconsciously be the victim of the old mummers' tradition that asserted the malignant grip the audience held upon every actor who truly loved his art.

He read now in a new light the struggle of their first weeks of married life. It had been the shadow of the public, that great public that had gathered to pay homage night after night to Gabrielle's wonderful acting, that had been so heavy between them. It was as if that vast multitude, having once been there, must always be there, if only in spirit, and she must play to them simply, unconsciously, with no show of artifice, but because it was intrinsically her nature so to do. Every emotion she felt, instead of being locked selfishly within her own breast, must needs go out till its vibrations evoke an answering chord in the breasts of others. The tragedy was that what Fletcher had attributed in the beginning as unnatural in her was in reality nature in its larger sense that merges individual identity in general humanity. Fletcher was none the happier for having worked out in his mind the subtleties of the difference.

The summer months were the more precious, however, in that their happiness was not free from the haunting fear of what the future might bring.

It was indicative of the trend and development of thought of each that what in the spring had been tentative suggestion in the fall took on the nature of inevitable decision. Without further discussion of the matter, without a question on the part of either or the slightest voicing of the intense regret in their hearts for what they were giving up, they brought their idyll to a close with a semblance of casualness and sailed for America.

XI

It was at a dinner at the Jimmy Treadwells' that Gabrielle made her

début into that set of New York society with which her husband had identified his interests in previous years. There had been a few small preliminary affairs among Helen's friends, but Gabrielle very wisely set no store in her success with these. She knew inevitably that the great test would come when she was brought face to face at a dinner table with Lili Whitelaw.

The months of her married life had given Gabrielle even more confidence in her ability to qualify by the smart set standards. She attributed the disadvantage she had felt in those previous meetings with Lili to her own indecision of mind and uncertainty of position; as a married woman with the full sense of the security of an assured future she felt eager again to match her forces with Lili's. In her mind there was no question of her adequacy to meet the situation.

The Treadwell dinner she knew would offer the desired opportunity, and as she dressed she felt the same glow of expectancy, the same keen zest in life simply as life, that always filled her on first nights when she thrilled to the idea of the great audience eagerly awaiting her entrance.

Her costume had been a matter of great care. This was extraordinary for Gabrielle, whose choice of a thing was always immediate just because her taste was unerring.

Fletcher came into the room as she stood before the pier glass studying herself attentively. But there was no conceit in her attitude, only an impartial criticism.

"Do you like it?" she asked quietly, her eyes still on the image the glass gave back.

Fletcher stepped to her side and he, too, studied the picture.

The gown was a peacock blue, the soft elusiveness of it equalled only by its distinctiveness. The effect with Gabrielle's golden hair and deep eyes was startlingly beautiful.

Fletcher drew a deep breath as Gabrielle, noting his silence, turned to him questioningly.

"You are perfect," he said slowly as he kissed her.

Then holding her off as she smiled at his rapt expression he added:

"Almost *too* perfect!"

Her eyes clouded a little at that.

"You mean—" she said, "you would prefer a flaw—"

He shook his head smilingly. "I mean," he said, "that since the rest of us are *not* flawless you—"

"Are out of place?" she cut in quickly.

"Not at all," he laughed. "*We* are out of place. You put us out of character."

But this did not satisfy her and she sighed deeply as she turned away. He recognized the fact that in some way he had transgressed, so he followed her as she went over to the couch and took up her wrap.

"What is it, dear?" he asked.

"I don't know," she said as she faced him. "But I don't want you to feel that way—that I am somehow different. I want to be of you, of your life, of these people. Don't you see? You say I put you out of character—that I—"

There was an unusual quaver in her voice.

"Gabrielle!" he protested as he took both her hands in his. "That was only banter—only— Ah! how beautiful you are! You will be the most beautiful of all there to-night."

"But what does that matter?" she cried with a certain despair in her voice. "I was quite confident of myself, of everything up to a second ago. And now, something, I don't know what, tells me—"

She caught herself up at that and forced a little laugh, as she handed him her cloak.

He wrapped her in it and then putting his arms about her held her close. The look in his eyes quite satisfied her and she forgot her momentary despair in the happiness of the kiss he pressed upon her lips.

The dinner was a brilliant affair. Mrs. Jimmy knew her rôle as hostess, with the result of enough harmony of interests on the part of the guests

selected, to make for general agreement, with just the right amount of disparity of idea to make for discussion. If conversation could not be said to strike depths of thought, at least it was subtly exhilarating and keyed one up to compel attention by outdoing one's neighbour in scintillation.

Gabrielle enjoyed it; it was like playing a game that called for a certain readiness of wit and trickiness of intellect.

For the first time she admitted the charm of a set she had previously judged as falsely flat. There was a certain allure in the very frankness of their superficiality and their defiance of anything that made for the discomfort of a serious viewpoint.

Her own effect satisfied her, too, which might have had something to do with her approval of the others. Her entrance, when most of the dinner company had foregathered, had provoked just the proper amount of subdued éclat with its preliminary pause of suspended interest.

Mrs. Jimmy had looked her over with quick scrutiny. Her "My dear, I am *so* glad," rang perfectly true and showed her as having declared quite for the newcomer. The other women held back graciously; the men were less subtle, showing their admiration more obviously.

Gabrielle was placed at dinner between Gordon Cowdrey and Terrence Wick, where she continued to carry her triumph easily.

Fletcher was at the other end of the table beween two nondescript women with Lili Whitelaw within comfortable sparring distance. He had enjoyed to the full the marked dignity of the bow and smile she returned in answer to his rather flippant "Ah, so there you are, Lili!"

He had to admit to a certain curiosity as to the line she would adopt next; he was the more fearful because of the austerity of her beginning, so he watched her with care.

She, in turn, kept her eyes on Gabrielle with open scrutiny. After two or three rounds of laughter from the other end of the table, obviously the result of some *mot* on the part of Gabrielle, Lili had leaned forward conspicuously and smiled her dazzling, intimate smile into Fletcher's eyes.

That was all, but Fletcher had the uncomfortable consciousness that Gabrielle had caught that daring look. The more so, as the persiflage of which she had been the promoter suddenly flagged and dropped to a heavy silence that settled gradually on the other groups. Everyone looked about, disconcerted at the uncomfortable lull.

Then Lili leaned forward, a gleam in her slanting eyes, and looked at Gabrielle, who met her gaze steadily. It was the first indication she had given of being aware at all of Lili's presence. For a single second, as she realized the attention of the whole table was focussed upon her, directed by Lili's scrutiny, she had felt herself at a loss as to what to do. She ended by doing nothing, simply prolonging the attitude in which Lili had surprised her. She sat leaning slightly forward, a picture of arrested attention, with one arm outstretched toward her wine glass, the other in graceful poise at her side. Not a muscle moved as she took the brunt of the critical gaze of the whole company. Her eyes never wavered as they met Lili's; only her breathing showed her alive.

Lili broke the tenseness of the situation with her light laugh.

"You know—" she cried out and, although she looked straight at Fletcher, she embraced everyone present in her range. "Just that way. You see?" and she indicated Gabrielle with a sweep of her hands. "The candles seem to have been arranged like footlights. How lovely she is! Like a beautiful statue!"

The last words were said softly with a sort of suppressed tenderness.

Gabrielle got it, as everyone did. She felt herself trembling with anger. Then, reading the pain in her husband's eyes as she turned instinctively to him,

she had the courage to rise above the thrust.

"That reminds me," she said in her rich, low voice, "of an incident that happened at Grasse. Do you remember, George?"

She got his quick appreciation of the stand she was taking, as she smiled into his eyes, and went on to tell her story with greater conviction.

It was simply a tourist anecdote. The fact that it had no connection with Lili's remark pointed the most signally Gabrielle's tact in hitting upon it. She told it well, with just the right voice shadings and with a pause here and there to allow her listeners their laugh. When it was over, Gabrielle looked again at her husband and read her success in the look of gratitude he gave her for having saved so awkward a situation.

Conversation started up again with its usual hum, when Lili showed evidence of also having a story to tell. Again there was a lull and Lili took the floor. Hers, too, was a tourist story, a shipboard incident, told haphazard with a hit or miss daring of wit and inimitable byplay of pantomime. It was, all in all, a triumph of brilliant incoherence that got one through the very graphicness of its chaos. Lili's mirth was infectious; her audience roared itself good-naturedly almost to the point of hysteria.

It was when the merriment was at its height that Lili again looked at Fletcher. The fact that he pointedly evaded her glance told her that she had scored. She watched him carefully for the rest of the dinner; the fact that he evaded Gabrielle's eyes, too, when they sought his, pointed to Lili still more her triumph.

XII

To what extent the Treadwell dinner had been a tragedy Fletcher admitted to himself only gradually. At the time, he had looked upon Lili's part in the matter simply as a piece of maliciousness, prompted by her jealousy. It was, altogether, a most unfortunate incident, but that was all. Six months later he had come to realize the vital import of it and the bearing it had not only upon his own happiness but also upon that of Gabrielle.

Lili in her sharp little way had ferreted out Gabrielle's weak point, weak not because of any flaw intrinsically, but because of maladjustment to outside circumstances. Gabrielle's weakness lay in her very perfection, a perfection so simple, so natural that, just because of its simplicity and naturalness, it created doubt as to its validity. It might as well have been the last word in artifice, acting refined to the essence of the natural. She seemed, as Lili so artfully suggested, inevitably behind the footlights, with all the while the consciousness of an audience to be played upon, a consciousness that had its root not in any egotism but in the traditions of her art.

It was for this very reason that Fletcher, as he struggled with his doubts and disappointment, despaired. The thing he had to contend with was not primarily in Gabrielle, but in her race.

At first he regretted bitterly that they had come back to America, but in the end he realized the problem was one he would have been obliged to face eventually, even if they had lingered on in the quiet of the Esterelles. It was simply that the problem was rendered more acute by the presence of others.

It was not that Fletcher's basic love for Gabrielle was less fine and strong; the surface dissatisfaction was therefore the more tragic. By degrees all the old admiration that her beauty and grace had compelled gave way to a protest at the perfection of them. If he could have surprised her once in awkwardness! If the attitude were less perfect; the voice less beautifully modulated!

At dinners, at the opera, he was tormented constantly lest he read in the eyes of others a reflection of his own criticism of this woman he loved so. That people were beginning to realize

a lack in her he knew full well; Lili Whitelaw had seen to that. It was obvious in the very polite deference with which she was treated generally, a deference that precluded anything suggestive of intimacy. Even the enthusiasm of the various men who had rushed in the beginning to pay homage to her had flagged. She was accepted, as his wife was bound to be, of course, but she did not dominate. It was almost, in the end, as if people simply tolerated her for the sake of the Fletcher name, and he shrank from the boredom he might read in their eyes.

It was as if that, too, might be a reflection of what was going on in his own soul. For Fletcher could not but admit as time went on the monotony of his wife's perfection. Often as he held her in his arms and told her how lovely she was, he hated himself as a hypocrite; he would so infinitely have preferred the cheek tear-stained, her lovely hair in disarray, the attitude of less assurance. Anything to prove the real humanity of her!

And yet, it was for the very humanity of her that Fletcher had married her! In that lay the incongruity of their present relation. It was for that reason he struggled the more to break through the outside crust of her seeming artificiality, to find again those qualities that made for spontaneity of interest in daily intercourse.

It was at a party given at Lili's eight months after their return to America that Fletcher realized something had to be done definitely to enable him to throw off the cynical discontent that was fastening so surely upon him. Lili's party had been a costume ball.

"Come in any old thing; it's to be just a rollick," Lili had announced gaily as she encountered Fletcher one day coming out of Tiffany's. "No, I'm going up to Dreiser's. What time is it? Oh! Quarter to one!"

She gazed reflectively about and then brought her troubled eyes back to Fletcher's. "It *would* be nice to lunch together at Sherry's. Where is Gabrielle?"

"Lunching at Helen's. I was going to the club."

Then, after a pause, "Of course, we can lunch together at Sherry's."

Fletcher was painfully conscious of his awkwardness. Had he taken Lili's suggestion more promptly, there would have seemed less guilt in his yielding. For it was the most natural thing in the world for any two individuals of their free and easy set to lunch together on a chance encounter. His pause, with its very obvious weighing of the matter, had been the incriminating factor and seemed to brand the meeting as an illicit rendezvous. It was this very uneasy feeling, as of doing something wrong, that gave zest to the tête à tête that followed. There was just that *air intime* about it that Lili could evoke out of the most unyielding of circumstances.

Lili, herself, had never looked prettier. Fletcher enjoyed her little *naïvetés* and almost forgot they were part of her artificiality. She told a riské joke with the most infectious of laughs; she allowed herself to be caught in a lie and smiled deeply into his eyes her appreciation of his cleverness. She subdued her mirth at just the right moment to a wistful thoughtfulness.

"And now tell me," she had said, "what the months have brought you."

Fletcher hesitated to frame his reply convincingly.

"Never mind, if you don't want to," she had put in softly with almost a note of commiseration in her voice.

"Oh, it isn't *that*," he said.

"What?" she asked wonderingly.

"What your tone implied—" he had said before he thought.

"What *did* it imply?" she asked and he realized the trap.

"Oh, dissatisfaction," he said. "But I'm *perfectly* happy."

She ignored his last statement.

"I implied nothing of the sort," she said. "That idea must have originated in your own mind. A protest too much!"

His only answer was to repeat:

"I am perfectly happy."

Lili thought deeply at that.

Then, as if with lightning inspiration:

"So, that's it! I have wondered often. You seem, somehow, to have lost your old zest in things. It's because, being *perfectly* happy—you have nothing to agonize for, no heights to climb—"

Fletcher frowned at that. He was at a loss how to meet Lili's thrust; a fact that proved his wits rusty. She saw her advantage.

"Ah, can't you see? It's when two people are *not* perfectly happy that they're closest together. The little scenes and recriminations—the tears and things—the knowing each other's weaknesses and faults—the dear little intimacies that spring from unreason—the forgiving and being forgiven—ah!"

Lili drew a deep breath and there was supreme ecstacy in her tone as, with a voice tremulous with emotion, she wound up, "I *love* to be forgiven."

This brought them out of the depths. Fletcher put back his head and laughed long and heartily. Lili joined him, but before their mirth had worked itself quite out, she had risen. She had scored in amusing him; she meant to leave in the flush of her triumph.

Fletcher said nothing that day to Gabrielle of his meeting with Lili. He had found her strangely silent at dinner time, and, although he tried to broach the subject several times, felt unequal to handling it with just the proper casualness.

"To-morrow!" he had said to himself, but the next day dragged its length without his bringing himself to the point.

It wasn't until they were dressed for the ball and about to start that Fletcher took the initiative. It is doubtful if he would have taken it then, had it not been for a strange look of scrutiny he had surprised in Gabrielle's eyes. He met it with a sense of guilt that was no less keen for all his realization that he had done nothing really culpable.

"By the way," he had begun. "Did I tell you I ran into Lili yesterday and we—"

Gabrielle had turned away.

"Yes, I know," she answered in her deep voice.

This brought Fletcher up short.

"Oh!" he ejaculated. Then, "How did you know?"

"Lili called at Helen's on her way home."

"I see," said Fletcher.

They looked at each other a minute.

"How do you like my costume?" asked Gabrielle quietly.

"It's beautiful. Who did it?"

"Lucille."

"I imagine it will be something of a romp to-night," he said turning away.

"You mean you think me overdressed?"

There was a certain defiance in Gabrielle's tone that was quite new. It aroused an answering antagonism in Fletcher.

"Not overdressed exactly! But I can't imagine a frolic with a headdress like that."

He regretted the words the minute he had said them and put out his hand to her, but she turned away.

Then as if with a sudden resolution she turned back and faced him squarely.

"I cannot frolic!" she said in low, even tones. "You know that. That's where the trouble lies!"

Her directness took him aback.

"The trouble lies—" he repeated blankly. "*What* trouble?"

She sighed deeply at that. Then, looking at the clock she shook her head. "We haven't time now. To-morrow—"

"Gabrielle!" he cried. "You're not happy! You're—"

"No," she said, "I am *not* happy."

He started to protest but she cut him short. "No, no! You mustn't. We *have* to see this ball through. I promised Lili—"

"Ah," he said, "it's Lili."

But she shook her head. "I wish it were only Lili—"

He looked at her quickly at that.

She met his eyes unflinchingly and it was his turn now to turn away. He realized she had guessed the truth of his dissatisfaction and felt himself not ready to meet the issue.

"Very well," he had said. "To-morrow!"

He wanted to take her in his arms, for he felt an overwhelming tenderness for her as he realized the months had brought her, too, suffering. But the gorgeous Egyptian costume with its towering headdress was too forbidding, and while he hesitated she had put her cloak about her shoulders, and passed out into the hall.

The ball was a romp; Lili's parties always were. To Fletcher it came as a happy relief, a breathing space. He had had no method of gauging the extent of the brain worry the last few months had brought him; the fact that he had no difficulty in giving himself utterly to all the little absurdities in which Lili's affairs abounded was the first indication he had of the real need of change. He had never condemned frivolity, but he had never been able to give himself up to it convincingly. It was with great surprise, therefore, that he found himself this particular night equal to any grotesque caper. Particularly as he had started out under such inauspicious circumstances and with the weight upon him of the responsibility of the talk he and Gabrielle were to have in the morning.

Lili had challenged him upon his arrival.

"Your costume is too stupid," she had said, referring to his very conservative domino. "You will have to make up in spirit."

Lili, herself, was irresistible as a little street gamin, with tousled hair and patched clothes. A large hole in one of her stockings showed her at her whitest.

"And you—you are perfect as usual," she had murmured to Gabrielle. "But you don't go with a Jazz band. Ah! there it is! En avant! But no! Gordon, *you* dance with Gabrielle—"

And before he knew it Fletcher was threading the mazes of the fox trot with Lili pressed perilously close in his arms.

It was that first dance that stirred in him the desire for once in his life to lose his dignity, for the dignity and reserve that were so essential a part of his make-up were beginning to be identified in his mind with the pressure of thought that was wearying his brain and he longed for even the briefest respite from them. So he devoted himself to Lili and Mrs. Tony Winters and frolicked with the best of them.

He had looked about after the first dance for Gabrielle.

"She is flirting with Gordon," Lili had announced, and then smiled at the absurdity of the suggestion. "Gabrielle could never flirt, really, could she?" she went on.

Then, with a deep sigh, "She *is* so wonderful."

Fletcher floundered about, trying to select the least compromising line. He ended by suggesting champagne and the two of them withdrew to the dining room.

At two o'clock Fletcher felt the spirit that had prompted his gaiety suddenly flag. He was tired, dead tired and wanted to go home. The revelry seemed suddenly empty and he felt again the weight of the problem he had been trying so hard to lose. He sought out Gabrielle in desperate haste. She had carefully avoided him during the whole evening, pleading a full programme when they were brought face to face. He stopped her in the middle of a dance with Jimmy Treadwell.

"I want to go home," he said.

She read his fatigue and left Jimmy in the midst of violent protests. They didn't even seek out Lili to make their adieux, but went directly.

Nothing was said until they had reached Gabrielle's room. Then they faced each other, conscious that the crisis they must meet, must be met now. There was an ill-suppressed excitement in Fletcher's manner, a rather hard determination in Gabrielle's.

He had thrown himself in a chair;

she came and sat in an unyielding attitude directly in front of him. They looked at each other. Then Gabrielle said with perfect self-possession,

"In what have I failed?"

It was the exact repetition of a line in her last show.

Fletcher made a little despairing gesture, then roused himself with the realization that now was the time to fight the matter out if they hoped for future understanding.

"Oh, it's just that—*that*," he said. "I feel—I cannot get over the idea you are acting, forever acting—that every word you utter, every gesture you make is a repetition of something that has gone before, something that has belonged to everyone, everyone who could pay. When you put out your arms, I think of all those stage lovers who have come to you. I think of the crowds who have applauded you for the thrill of your lovemaking. Those crowds! They seem so always there, and you belong to them, not to me! Oh, Gabrielle! To feel for one second that you were mine—mine—"

Gabrielle had sat perfectly erect with a set strained look in her eyes. The despair in Fletcher's voice as he poured out his words seemed to strike an answering note in her heart. She dragged herself to her feet with a great sob and then found herself weeping wildly in his arms. Fletcher was startled. He had somehow thought that she would meet his appeal with chill analysis; her quick yielding to her emotions, that had its element of the childish, called forth the greater tenderness because of its unexpectedness. It was with a feeling of thankfulness that he pressed her to him; in the abandon of her grief she had quite lost the sense of self. For the first time since they had come back to America he felt they were alone together with no shadow of the outside world between them.

XIII

THE Fletchers went to their camp in the Adirondacks for a month. It was Fletcher's idea. Gabrielle had pleaded that they were running away from their problem, but Fletcher had been obdurate.

"We will have a second honeymoon, and come back strong enough to fight anything," he had said gaily.

The scene with Gabrielle had given him new confidence in himself. Her confession that she, too, had been conscious of some sort of barrier between them since their return had filled him with joy. He had thought of her as living in herself with no sense of the rift between them that threatened to become wider just because of her ignorance of its existence. The frank discussion of the matter that had followed the morning after Gabrielle's passionate abandon to her grief had seemed to mark the beginning of a new era of understanding.

"I have realized it all so thoroughly," Gabrielle had said. "I cannot lose myself. I cannot be silly and frolic and all the rest of it. There is something that prevents. I have longed so many times, as I have watched Lili, for the ability to be inconsistent, for the charm that springs from unreliability."

Fletcher had laughed at that, but he glimpsed something of the struggle that had been going on in Gabrielle's mind these many months, a struggle her beautiful calm exterior had so completely belied.

The first week in the mountains they talked, as they had never talked before, each seeming to take delight in probing his own soul and dragging to light unsuspected little weaknesses for the other's scrutiny. It seemed impossible, that, having once broken down all barriers of reserve, they could ever again be anything but honest and direct in their dealings with each other. The weeks in the Esterelles showed empty and valueless in comparison with the fullness of the intimacy established in the first few days of this, as Fletcher had termed it, their second honeymoon.

The second week of their stay brought a variety of forwarded letters.

"Why did we leave an address?" sighed Gabrielle one morning at break-

fast, as she listlessly cut open and sorted the numerous letters. One brought her a pause and then a slightly nervous laugh. Fletcher looked up.

"A letter from Kleinberg!" she exclaimed. "An offer for his new show!"

Their eyes met, a quick question in his.

"Do you *want*—" he began.

"Certainly *not*," she answered shortly. "How can you think—" Her eyes dropped to a letter he was just picking up. Fletcher looked at it quickly; the conspicuous stationery with its erratic scrawl confessed it immediately as Lili's.

"Lili!" he said weakly and showed his confusion as he opened the envelope.

Gabrielle said nothing, but kept her eyes upon him as he read. He read it once, then over again slowly to gain time, with all the while a sense of the effect it would have on Gabrielle when she read it. For he must needs pass it over to her; of that he was certain.

"How absurb!" he exclaimed at last, as he held the letter out. "Lili's heard the rumour you're going back on the stage—"

"And writes to offer you condolence—" put in Gabrielle steadily, ignoring the letter.

"Why, not exactly! That is—well—something of the sort. Read it yourself."

Gabrielle continued to ignore the outstretched letter, so Fletcher drew it back a little angrily.

"I'll read it to you," he suggested.

But Gabrielle had turned away.

"I'm not at all interested," she had said.

Fletcher was irritated by her manner. That he was in no way responsible for Lili's trickiness made Gabrielle's attitude seem the more unreasonable. He turned to the rest of his mail, made a few commentaries which were received politely but coolly, and then excused himself from the table.

Strange to say, the thing that impressed him most in the whole scene was the perfect enunciation of the words, "I am not at all interested."

Not again, during the rest of their stay in the mountains, did the two recover the understanding that had characterized their first days there. It would seem as if Gabrielle regretted with a wild regret those days of intimate revelation and so entrenched herself the more securely behind a hard reserve. Had Fletcher been found guilty of bruiting about her confidences at large, her rigour of attitude could not have been more severe.

Whether a reaction of this sort was inevitable to a nature like Gabrielle's, the integrity of which demands reservations, or whether Lili's letter brought it about, it is impossible to say. At any rate, Fletcher found himself day by day thrown more and more on his own resources. He pleaded openly for a renewal of their intimacy that had deemed nothing too sacred to touch, but Gabrielle would only smile her cold smile and answer—"I have not changed. There is no difference in my attitude."

The end of the month found them farther apart than they had been in the beginning. The suggestion that they go back to New York came from Fletcher.

During the summer months that followed, Gabrielle and Fletcher were indefatigable in their social activities. Newport, Bar Harbour, Narragansett! A week here, a fortnight there, a yachting trip at random. It was all very delightful, besides serving the purpose intended, that of precluding any possibility of intimate intercourse between the two.

Fletcher found himself, when they were alone, for any length of time together, goaded by Gabrielle's formality into an unreasoning irritability. The more so, as those moments when she had given herself to him, free from self-consciousness, were still vivid in his mind. It seemed almost as if there had been malice in her momentary abandon and that she had meant those memories to linger as a torment.

He could have stood all this, however, had it not been for a new element that entered into the situation directly

after their return from the mountains. Gabrielle began most obviously to cheapen herself. It was as if, in desperation at the thought that she was losing her hold of her husband, she sought to attach to herself some suitor, any suitor whose attentions might point her charm.

As Lili had said, "Gabrielle cannot flirt." It was quite true. Her attempts at it were often ludicrous, pathetic. Her nature was too serious a one to do anything lightly; she succeeded only in making herself ridiculous. Gordon Cowdrey evaded her; Terrence Wick made comments—to other women. And all Fletcher could do was to sit by and watch. It was the more pitiful tragedy to him because he knew the motive that prompted her to her folly.

It was her way of attempting to humanize herself, of undermining that perfection that seemed the bar between them. He remembered the sharp pain in her voice as she had cried one night, "I want to be of you, of your life, of these people!"

Poor Gabrielle! She flirted crassly and assumed hilarity. She copied every absurdity of those about her without achieving any of the abandon that makes absurdity feasible.

Fletcher protested; she met him with chill formality.

"But why *should* you object?" she demanded. "The other women in your set—"

"But you! *You* are different. Can't you see?" he cried in desperation.

"Exactly! It's *that* I'm working to overcome," she answered calmly, and refused to go into the matter further. There was that in her manner, in her deadly poise that had the power of sapping his force of resistance. He would go to her asurge with emotion; a word or two of her beautifully modulated voice reduced him to a feeling of helplessness and dull despair.

It was just before the first dinner given in town in the fall that Fletcher felt himself exasperated to the point of making any scene to interrupt the intolerable indifference of their intercourse. He had gone to Gabrielle's room in the afternoon only to be turned away by the maid. "Madame is resting."

This seemed all a part of Gabrielle's deliberate intention to exclude him from her life as she now lived it, and he had spent the intervening time between then and tea-time in brooding upon the unfairness of it.

At five o'clock he had gone again to her room. He found her lying listlessly in a chaise longue. As she looked up at him, he was conscious for the first time that she was thinner, paler than he had ever seen her. His anger broke as he bent over quickly and kissed her.

"Gabrielle!" he cried. "Why do you do it? Why this indifference, this deliberate keeping me off?"

She did not evade him as usual, only sighed wearily as she answered.

"It isn't deliberate. It's—oh, I can't explain! But ever since those first days in the mountains I have been more conscious of myself than ever. Just because we did get down so deep—just because I laid bare my every thought! I have tried hard, tried hard. But when we are alone together, just because I do try to be natural each word is more forced, each attitude more deliberate. I have struggled, but there has seemed only one way—to keep away from you, to have other people about. And then they, too, are conscious of my continual acting, Gordon and Terry! I weary them, and you read their thoughts. Oh, I know, I know. Whichever way I turn, whichever—"

Her voice went on monotonously.

As Fletcher looked at her, he took in her words and their meaning, but he felt himself in no way gripped as he had been when she had sobbed out her trouble so wildly in his arms. She might have been rehearsing a monologue in a new play for all the emotional effect she had on him. She read her failure in the dull look in his eyes as they rested upon her.

"One thing," she said, and now her

voice trembled a little. "I still love you. I shall always love you. My love has strengthened as yours has weakened."

He put up his hand in protest but she shook her head.

"It's quite true. Why deny it?"

Again he opened his lips to speak, but somehow lacked the energy.

Her low, carefully enunciated words as usual sapped his strength.

She rose now and went to her dressing-table.

"You see—even these few minutes you are bored."

Then with a sudden flash she put out her arms. "I would give anything in the world to stir you, thrill you as I did in the days before we were married—when every time I looked out into the audience I could read the surge of love in your eyes. Oh, George!"

Fletcher made a supreme effort to meet her appeal. He took a step weakly forward. She saw his indecision and burst into a laugh that rang true and musical.

"Do you remember it?" she asked lightly. "That is an echo from my first play called 'Disillusion.' Or was that before your day?"

Fletcher was caught unawares. Doubt, anger, the sense that he had been tricked surged up in him. He stood a second, breathing heavily, his eyes in Gabrielle's, then turned and left the room.

XIV

THAT night at the dinner it was with the greatest effort that Fletcher could bring himself to talk at all. Lili seized at once upon his depression and made it the subject of much banter.

Conversation turned on the rumour, still current, of Gabrielle's return to the stage.

"But all women *do* go back," Lili had announced with conviction.

"I shall never go back," Gabrielle had said calmly.

"But once you have been able to stir a multitude, how *can* you be content with just us?" Lili protested. Then with a drop, "With just George, in fact. Or is it *he* qualifies as a whole audience?"

Gabrielle hesitated a brief second and as she hesitated Lili had turned to Fletcher.

"But *you?* Wouldn't you like to see her once more behind the footlights? To feel that expectant thrill just before her entrance—to feel yourself in the grip of her acting—"

Fletcher smiled a forced smile as he shook his head, but Lili had already turned again to Gabrielle.

"Well, I know if I had led your life," she said, "I'd be ineffably bored with all this. Admit now, honestly. Doesn't it bore you sometimes? Don't you pine now and then for a little of the old tumultuous adulation?"

Gabrielle had been leaning slightly forward, a flush on her face, her lips slightly parted. Her eyes sought those of her husband, but he was exchanging platitudes with the woman next him and avoided her gaze.

Gabrielle relaxed her attitude suddenly and with a light laugh took her decision.

"Well, if you force me—yes, I *do* pine for the stage. Some day I *shall* go back."

XV

KLEINBERG'S show opened in January with Gabrielle in the leading rôle. Fletcher had opposed the move bitterly at first and there had been many scenes. The fact that they continually descended to argument and recrimination, quite contrary to the nature of both, made their dissension seem the more terrible. Fletcher was exasperated to an unreasonable irritability; Gabrielle had recourse to cutting sarcasms.

The newspapers took up the matter of the new play and Fletcher was driven to his club to avoid persistent reporters. Pictures of Gabrielle greeted him in every newspaper he picked up. He disliked his friends to bring the thing to open discussion; he resented

silence in regard to it as an indication of pity for his plight.

It was the day after the contract was signed that Fletcher was brought to the realization that there was something deeper involved in Gabrielle's decision than simply a woman's vagary. He had gone to her room to find her looking fixedly in the glass and there were unmistakable signs of tears on her cheeks. His mood softened as he sat down beside her.

"Well?" she asked.

"I came to tell you—" he said, and then hesitated.

The thing he had come to say seemed impossible now as he looked at her.

Her attitude stiffened and the light in her eyes gave way to the hard glint that was characteristic of them now.

"You came to tell me that if I persist, we must separate. Is that it?"

Her cold way of putting it angered him.

"That's exactly what I mean," he said and his voice sounded harsh. "I can't stand all this row—reporters and rehearsals and that damned Jew of a manager."

She had turned away at that and he could not see her face.

"I will go and live at the Club. We must keep up a certain appearance. You can have the house—"

His anger trailed off as she uttered a sharp little protest, and it was then he got the full force of her move as the strategy of a woman playing a game for a desperate end.

"No, no!" she cried. "Not—not yet. Wait till after the opening night. It may be different then. Something may happen. Oh, it isn't that this has separated us. It may be *this* will bring us together again. As it was, we could not have gone on. Anything, anything rather than that terrible, silent disapproval there was before. Now, perhaps, when I am back in my own element—I may stir you as I want to do—I may cease to bore you—"

She breathed a deep sigh that was half a sob and put her hand over her face.

Fletcher took an indecisive step forward. It was indicative of the strained relation that now existed between them that even in the face of her confession with all that it held of heroic sacrifice and love he could not bring himself to take her in his arms.

"Very well!" he faltered at length. "I will do nothing yet. Perhaps—perhaps something will happen."

They both realized the flat inadequacy of the words and as they hesitated how to cover decently the failure of them, Gabrielle's maid came in.

"Mr. Kleinberg!" she announced.

XVI

It was with something of the old feeling of exhilaration hardly suppressed that Fletcher entered the theatre the opening night of Gabrielle's performance. By accident of circumstance it had proved the same place where she had played in her last show. Fletcher even recognized some familiar faces among the ushers. There was the same hum of excitement, the same buzz of conversation.

Since the night when Gabrielle had revealed her object in returning to the old life, Fletcher had gone through a succession of curious psychological phases.

First, there had come a sense of pity for her at the uselessness of the sacrifice she was making, together with deep contrition that he had wronged her by attributing to her an unworthy motive. Then had come a question—was the sacrifice useless?

Might not Gabrielle with her fine sense of values, her keen intuition, be right?

Might not this be, as she had said, the only way of establishing once again the old relation of understanding and devotion?

Back in her old element, she might again wring from him the old thrill of adoration, compel that glorious response her nature so needed, the lack of which had so sorely tormented her.

The more Fletcher thought of the matter, the greater hope he conjured up that the experiment prove a happy one. The hope became almost a certainty as he dwelt upon it and the last week before the opening found him with a sense of security as to the outcome of it all.

As he took his seat, the music started up. He put his hand over his eyes for a minute to control himself, for he was suddenly overwhelmed by a flood of emotion and recollection that left him trembling and uncertain of himself. Then he looked about. There was a glow over everything, a subdued expectancy in the faces raised so eagerly to the stage. And then the curtain rose.

At the same instant there was a confusion in the stage box nearest him. As Fletcher turned in annoyance at the untimely interruption, the spell of his rapt anticipation seemed broken. He did not need the smile Lili flashed him to tell him who it was. His eagerness died out on the second and in its place a lethargy seemed to fasten upon him. He knew inevitably that the incident, trivial though it was, had disturbed his thoughts, upon the continuity of which his whole future happiness depended. He watched with a dull resentment the settling of the party—the Treadwells and Gordon, Larry Winters— What were they saying about him? Some *bon mot* of Lili's at his expense, doubtless!

He was startled out of his speculation by a thunderous applause, and with a sharp feeling of guilt turned to see that Gabrielle had already made her entrance. Her eyes as they met his over the footlights showed all too surely that she had caught him in his abstraction. There was a passion of protest in the look she gave him; Fletcher could only meet it with grim despair, and with the realization that those few seconds had lost them to each other.

Gabrielle played that night as she had never played before, with a wild abandon that left her audience gasping from sheer emotional strain. The applause was violent, insistent. She came before the curtain time and time again. Lili threw her the orchids she was wearing. Gabrielle smiled her acknowledgment as she raised them to her lips and kissed them.

In the whole frenzy of the ovation, Fletcher felt himself the only one unmoved. He forced himself to applause, with a consciousness of Lili's scrutiny. The last curtain call showed Gabrielle white and weary. She bowed with her usual grace, and then looked straight at her husband. Fletcher felt the despair in his heart only too accurately mirrored in the depths of her beautiful eyes.

Out in the lobby he met Lili.

"You *must* come to supper with us," she insisted.

But he shook his head. "No," he answered and evaded her look. "Gabrielle will be tired!"

Outside when he found his motor, he hesitated on the step of it. Then, with a gesture as of quick decision he turned away.

"Go around to the stage-door and wait for Mrs. Fletcher," he directed his chauffeur.

Then, getting into a taxi:

"To the Union Club," he said wearily.

Lili Whitelaw and her party had watched the little by-play.

Gordon Cowdrey bent low to catch the words that Lili's red lips were framing.

"After all, marriage is so little subtle!"

COMFORT

By James Drake

THERE was one who could comfort her.

* * * * *

Her beautiful face was as white as a lily petal and her full round lips trembled as she bent over the coffin of her husband.

She had loved him passionately.

She was conscious of nothing but the corpse of the man she had loved.

Her grief absorbed her.

The minister spoke to her gently, but her eyes did not move from the coffin.

Her mother put her arms about her quivering shoulders, but she did not realize that anyone was near.

When her little child cried out to her it was as if she had no life.

There seemed to be none who could comfort her.

* * *

There was a man about town who dropped in for the funeral.

He loathed the heavy fragrance of the floral pieces, the discordant whispering, the stifled sobs, the darkened rooms, the frightened children, and the unconcerned undertaker.

He came because it was the thing to do.

He was the one who could comfort her . . .

"How stunning you look in black, my dear!" he whispered.

THEIR KISSES

By Karl R. Coolidge

SHE has just said "Yes": ——————————
En route from the Church: —— —— ——— ——————
On the honeymoon: ——————————————
Settled down: — ——— —— —
After a year: —
Two years later: { ——————————————
——————————————*

* But not with (his wife) (her husband).

THE EXONERATION OF YOUNG DASS

By L. M. Hussey

THEY had no objection to married men in that club, but the married men, from the nature of their servitude, seldom put in an appearance. When a member was about to take a wife he was given a dinner that amounted to a farewell. This evening there was being vouchsafed to Hansel, on the night before his wedding day, that melancholy fêting.

Phillip Chambers, the portrait painter, was master of ceremonies. The hour had passed midnight and strands of twisted smoke hung like wraiths in the atmosphere of the dining-room. Hansel, the man honoured, had gone to sleep with a half-emptied glass in front of him, and two or three of the other less hardy spirits were somnolent. A still-articulate group, near Chambers, had drifted into fatuities.

Chambers listened to them in a scowling silence.

"You fellows are liars!" he broke out, suddenly.

"How's that?"

"I say you're liars, all of you. You hold that you're unmarried because of your cleverness, whereas you're unmarried because of your blind, dumb luck!"

A man opposite Chambers raised his eyebrows superciliously.

"I suppose you're out of our class," he said. "I suppose *you* are the clever one!"

"No, I'm not," said Chambers. "I was lucky myself. . . ."

"Well, as I was going to say—"

"It happened two or three summers ago," broke in Chambers, assuming the flexed position of one who is about to tell quite a story. "It happened because I yielded to one of my periodic fancies to do landscapes. I confessed my desire to a person whom I have now come to view more charitably—who probably didn't wish me any especial evil—and he told me of a quiet place in the country where I would be properly fed, comfortably housed and little disturbed—"

"Look here!" broke in a voice.

"He said," continued Chambers, with suave dominance, "that there were only two in the family—a widow and her young son. I wrote to this woman. She answered my letter pleasantly and I wrote again, suggesting terms. They were arranged and I packed up some board, a roll of canvas and a sketch box. I left for the place in July, without a foreboding.

"I had given very little thought to the widow and my picture of her was quite colourless and conventional. She was a mere sartorial fancy to me; I saw her only as a black dress. Above this dress I imagined a pale face that never emerged into features. For me she had no age.

"She had promised to meet me at the station and drive me to the house, which was considerably outside the village. I got off and looked about for the black dress. But no figure in sable garments presented itself. The train pulled out; a band of smoke and cinders dropped down across the platform; I stood, encumbered with parcels, like a man lost in another country. I was in a mental attitude for warm remarks when a young woman approached me.

"'You must be Mr. Chambers,' she said.

"'I am! Did Mrs. Bossard send you?'

"The young woman laughed.

"'I'm Mrs. Bossard,' she said.

"In my surprise I probably disconcerted her by staring. She was so unlike the black dress of my negligent fancy! Her clothes were white and summery; in her blouse the two ends of a green scarf tossed in the wind like the leaves of a fragile plant. She wore no hat and her straight, thick hair was drawn close about her head in the manner of a turban. It was brown, a rich shade, like the gloss and colour acquired by a meerschaum pipe after long smoking. Her face was laughing and pretty.

"The appearance of this woman was one of the great unpleasant surprises of my life. As she dropped her eyes before my astonished stare, I saw that I would have to arm myself against her. I had come down from the city to paint, with nothing more distracting in my mind than a vague presence of black clothes. The black clothes had disappeared like conjury and left a notably good-looking woman. I don't want you fellows to imagine that I'm particularly terrified by a good-looking face, but I don't like to be—so to speak—ambushed by one; taken unprepared, unaware. To a man of my undomestic disposition there's something in that that touches the dreadful. I had an impulse to run away.

"But it couldn't be managed. The woman took me to a team she had waiting and we drove off. The horses moved along rapidly, with considerable spirit. I felt rather like a trophy being carried home.

"I found the place charming enough. We approached the house through a lane that for several hundred yards revealed nothing, until, on the completion of a sharp turn, the buildings were visible through an enclosure of trees. The house was built in a hollow and rising ground came up from it at every point, like the sides of a shallow bowl.

"'Do you like it?' the woman asked me.

"'I find it very pretty, Mrs. Bossard,' I replied, attempting a formality as great as possible; I was resolved to keep all my conversations with her as unemotional as a text-book on geometry.

"I had quite forgotten about the young son of this establishment. He appeared as we walked across the lawn, giving me my initial reminder of his existence. The mother I had considered in prospect as an ambulant black dress; the boy I had ignored. Perhaps there is nothing more fatuous than my imagination!

"Here's Young Dass coming to meet us!' exclaimed Mrs. Bossard. 'His name is Dallas,' she elaborated, 'but Dass is the baby name.'

"I know so little about children that it is difficult for me, from their external aspects, to determine even their sex. The estimation of their ages is quite beyond me. I can't tell you how old Young Dass was—I'd put his years anywhere between two and five.

"He approached us dressed in a pale blue sailor suit that he filled out very solidly. His small face that was intensely pale, bore a stern and unsmiling aspect. He drew up before me and delivered himself of a military salute.

"I smiled at Dass and was about to pat him on the head, when I observed that his face, turned up to me, bore a terrifying grimace. I noticed then, for the first time, Young Dass's pale, hard eye, that was of the hue of a bleached and frozen corn-flower. In that infantile countenance these merciless eyes had the startling effect of a great incongruity.

"'Salute your superior officer,' he demanded, speaking his words with an unexpectedly crisp enunciation.

"So genuine was the ring of his command that under the stress of it I did salute him.

"'That's better,' said Young Dass, still scowling.

"His mother laughed and led me into the house, where she showed me to the room I was to occupy.

"Left alone, I mechanically began to unpack my painting paraphernalia. I was troubled and disturbed. I was the victim of forebodings that lost none of their effect through their vagueness of definition.

"Before supper I took a short walk over the fields. The country charmed me and I made out much promising material. I forgot, for half an hour, the woman who didn't wear black—and Young Dass.

"At supper he sat oposite me. From time to time he broke in upon the conversation with remarks of startling irrelevancy, spoken with what seemed to be his characteristic crispness. His hard eye gleamed like a piece of polished slate. He watched me with an expression that appeared uncomfortably sardonic. In his presence I was uneasy. Now and again some grim and incomprehensible humour seized him, whereupon he laughed with a mirthless sound. His face was as pale as the cloth on the table, and fixed, due to the lowness of his chair and the limitations of his stature, only a few inches above it.

"I could not fathom any significance that Young Dass might have for me, yet he seemed charged with significance. By the armour of a polite frigidity I felt that I was already safe from the young woman who was his mother; I understood completely just what dangers might lie in her direction; she presented no mystery. Yet Young Dass, pallid of face, with his icy, scrutinizing eyes, moved me to a profound uneasiness; his youth accentuated the threat of him; he had the effect of a menace. I hurried through my meal and went outdoors.

"The next morning Young Dass did not appear at breakfast. His mother interpreted my look of inquiry.

"'Little Dass didn't want to get up,' she said. 'He seems to feel sick. I hope there's nothing really wrong with him!'

"I said something or other properly conventional and left the house shortly afterward with my sketch box.

"I returned before noon and encountered his mother near the door. She looked quite concerned.

"'He's sick!' she exclaimed.

"'Eh? Young Dass?' I questioned.

"'Come up and look at him,' she said.

"I ascended the stairs with her and we turned into a small room that adjoined her own. On the bed I saw the figure of Young Dass.

"He stared at us when we entered. His face was flushed. His eyes had an increased glitter. On his forehead and about his mouth I noticed a half a dozen small eruptions.

"'Chicken-pox!' exclaimed his mother. 'The doctor's been here!'

"'Chicken-pox!' yelled Young Dass, with sudden and terrifying vigour. 'Yes!! Chicken-pox! Chicken-pox . . . varicella . . . chicken-pox . . . varicella . . .' and he burst into a mad song, a refrain of these two words, that he voiced like an incantation.

"He subsided then into silence and looked at us no more; in our presence he now seemed as uninterested as an undertaker going to a christening. We withdrew.

"I must confess to you fellows that I then experienced some very ungenerous sensations. I could not work up any pity for Young Dass and I felt nothing but relief. Literally, I was not displeased to have him sick; I felt more comfortable in the knowledge that his cold eye would no longer regard me across the table.

"That evening I had planned to sketch a night scene, but a sudden indisposition confined me to inactivity on the porch. The weather was warm, yet I was cold. A great lassitude possessed me and I was quite incapable of any activity. Presently I went up to my room. As I prepared for bed, I glanced into the mirror and observed that my face was flushed.

"In the morning I awakened with a violently aching head. I attempted to rise, but couldn't manage it. I lay quietly for an hour, perhaps, and then, to attract attention, thumped on the floor with my shoe. I heard Young

Dass's mother ascend the stairs and I called to her.

"She came into the room, stopped, and stared at me in consternation.

"'Good heavens!' she exclaimed. 'You've caught the chicken-pox!'

"She summoned the doctor, who confirmed her surmise.

"'It seems incredible that you should have caught it from the little boy,' he said. 'You've only been here two days. The period of incubation is almost never less than ten.'

"But I, smiling bitterly to myself, was not surprised. It seemed quite in keeping with what I should expect from Young Dass.

"The mere matter of me contracting an absurd case of varicella is rather funny, I suppose—but the complications of it are by no means amusing, provided you fellows possess any sympathy, or any appreciation of what might very well have concluded tragically.

"The doctor had scarcely left when Young Dass's mother knocked at the door. I told her to come in. She entered smiling.

"Her brown hair was heaped upon her head like a mass of threaded autumn leaves. Her dark eyes were lustrously and alarmingly soft. She stood over the bed and touched the sheet with a caressing gesture. In one hand she held a book.

"'I thought I'd come in and read to you,' she said. 'Would you like that?'

"I was too dispirited to say anything but yes. She sat down by the bed and began to read. Her voice was low and the words she spoke out of the book had the effect of endearments. I watched her profile in troubled fascination. She was abominably good to look at! I wanted her there—and yet, I wished her far away. Do you understand that? I was afraid!

"She had been reading fifteen or twenty minutes, when the door of my room opened slowly.

"From my position in the bed I could see no reason for its movement—the effect was startlingly sepulchral.

"Young Dass's mother turned and jumped up.

"'Dass!' she exclaimed. 'What are you doing here?'

"Wearing a white nightgown, Young Dass emerged at the side of the bed.

"'I'm well now,' he said. 'I don't want to be sick any more.'

"I turned my head and looked at him. His face was again white, spotted only by a half a dozen oval vesicles. He passed his eyes from my countenance to that of his mother; he dropped his glance to the floor and then, slowly throwing back his head, he laughed, mirthlessly, inscrutably.

"'Get right out of here, Dass!' his mother exclaimed.

"He obeyed her, but before he left he looked at me again, turning upon me his slatey eye, that now seemed malevolent, singularly evil.

"I made no such sudden and miraculous recovery as Dass. I was in bed for a week. During that time the woman, his mother, attended me constantly, reading to me in her caressing voice, presenting me with her unluckily pretty face. The days were an admixture of pleasure and absurd terror. I knew that I was unceasingly on the point of some irreparable declaration. I felt my days of liberty in dreadful jeopardy. I was weak; I was down; I was at the mercy of an adverse fortune!

"And each day Young Dass came in to see me and on each of these days his eye appeared to have known a sardonic increase; his glance was charged with subtle insinuation. In my heart I cursed Young Dass—it almost seemed that in his chicken-pox had been some malevolent hoax, a plot and intrigue directed against me.

"But I was finally able to sit up and with my returning strength I felt less fear of the abominable charm of Young Dass's mother. I was able to reassume, in part anyway, the armour of polite impersonality that I had at first worn against her.

"The first morning I went down to

breakfast she came in hurriedly and late.

"'Poor Dass!' she cried.

"'What is it?' I asked.

"'I'm afraid he's going to be ill,' she said.

"She ate her breakfast rapidly and then asked me if I would come upstairs and look at him.

"I followed her above and we went into Young Dass's room. I looked down upon him as he lay on the bed.

"As before, his face was flushed. Occasionally he coughed. His eyes were swollen and red. Under his skin I thought I detected a slight rash.

"I advised his mother to call in the doctor.

"He came and declared that Young Dass was suffering from an attack of measles.

"I was at once assailed with a foreboding and a fear. Measles! It would never do—I determined to pack up my things and leave the next morning.

"But I awoke upon a clouded world. My head felt hot; from moment to moment I sneezed; I was unable to breathe through my nose; my eyes were watery and dim. By pounding on the floor I attracted the attention of the woman and instructed her to telephone to the doctor.

"That person came, examined me, smiled in a sickly way, and said:

"'You've got the measles!'

"On the second day my face blossomed into a rash like a field of red flowers.

"Consider my feelings toward Young Dass! Consider the accentuation of them when, on the third day of his illness, he arose from his bed and declared himself cured! He came into my room and looked at me; he studied me with his adamant eye. I was convinced, utterly, of his malevolence. Had I been physically capable of it I would have done him violence.

"For his mother had redoubled her sympathetic attentions. Each day she sat close to me for hours and I lay motionless, watching her red lips in motion, yielding myself, a little further on each occasion, to the devilishness of her allure.

"Once I put out my hand, closing my fingers over hers. She bent her eyes upon me, saying nothing. A declaration rushed to my lips and I restrained it by a supremacy of effort that I knew could never be repeated. The next time . . .! She withdrew her hand and turned away from the bedside, sighing.

"But my convalescence was more rapid than I had hoped. Again strength returned and with it, increased resistance. I congratulated myself. I had escaped once more!

"But I determined to put myself in no further danger. I felt that in three or four days I would be strong enough to leave the house. I now suspected Young Dass of collusion and any deviltry. I dreaded the approach of his pallid face and his bleached, ultramarine-and-water eyes. I feared him and despised him.

"Yet, two days before I was ready to go, it was reported to me that Young Dass was unable to get up. In dreadful foreboding I went in to look at him. The doctor had not yet arrived.

"Young Dass complained of pains in his ears. He spoke of twinges when he endeavoured to talk. It seemed to me that I could observe a slight swelling between the mastoid process and the ramus of the jaw. . . .

"The doctor came: he pronounced it mumps.

"I was yet too weak to leave the house. Two more days at the least! In despair, I waited. Hourly I expected the slight headache, the sudden pain on mastication, the throb of the eardrums, the last and dreadful swelling. I was now hopeless. I knew that to successfully weather another siege would be impossible to me. I heard the soft, caressing voice reading to me and saw the motions of red, appealing lips. Abominable allure! Abominable charm, that threatened my precious liberty!

"And so I waited. The first day passed—I thought I felt some premon-

itory twinges. But I wasn't sure. The morning came—I raised my hand to my neck, felt it carefully—it was unenlarged!

"My breakfast was brought up to me by the young girl who attended to the kitchen; later in the day I went below and sat on the porch, spending the hours in uneasy waiting.

"When I went to bed nothing definite had developed.

"The following morning I awoke in terror. I must have just come out of a dream in which I figured with a stiff neck. But there was no such actuality. I arose, dressed, and for the first time since contracting the measles went down for breakfast. There I was quite astonished to encounter Young Dass, his face encircled by a white cloth, drawn up into two rabbit's ears at the top.

"'I'm tired of bed,' he said.

"His mother had not yet put in an appearance.

"Again Dass sat opposite me at the table and I watched him with sensations of hate and uneasiness. In a few hours I would be ready to escape—and yet it seemed to me that his precocious deviltry would inevitably circumvent me!

"And, again, the thought of my parting from his mother stirred me with uneasiness. I was afraid of that which I might say or do then. I knew that the consciousness of her charm was strongly in my veins. I realized that my escape, provided the opportunity of it remained open, was not all simplicity.

"Meanwhile, I wondered at the absence of his mother. Presently the kitchen girl brought in the breakfast.

"'When you've finished it, Mr. Chambers,' she said, 'the Mrs. says she'd like to see you upstairs.'

"I ate hurriedly, occupied with a sense of wonder. Leaving my coffee only half consumed, I hurried above.

"I found Young Dass's mother in her room. She looked up at me from a chair piled with cushions. Her expression was wan.

"'I'm taking the mumps,' she said in a strangled voice.

"I looked at her. I almost—unkindly enough—laughed in her face! Her appearance was vastly amusing. Her features were puffed and under her chin and over her head passed a ludicrous white bandage. Allure? The woman was no more alluring than a fish-wife. Charm? She didn't affect me in the least.

"I hurried out of her room and exhausted myself on the stairs in silent laughter. As I sat weakly on the top step, Young Dass commenced the ascent from below.

"I looked down upon his yellow head. He drew close to me and stood in front of me. I gazed into his infantile blue eye. I found nothing sardonic, nothing malevolent there. For me, Young Dass was exonerated from any special malignity.

"'Dass,' I said, reaching into my pocket, 'here is a quarter for you. Why did you give your mother the mumps?'

"'I didn't,' said Dass. 'She took them!'"

* * * * *

Chambers ceased speaking and looked about him. In the air sounded a resonant hum, the harmonious commingling of bass, baritone and tenor elements, like the vibrant noise of a defective water-pipe. He glanced from figure to figure, surprised. Each member of the club was musically sleeping.

DARLING

By James Stephens

OLD FOUR EYES was quite young. That is, he was about thirty-three or four years of age, but there are people who are born middle-aged, and he was one of them. He was called "old" for that reason, and he was called "Four Eyes" because he wore spectacles. Maybe he was born with spectacles on also.

He had attained to all the dignity which the average man can ever hope for, that is, he was married and he had a situation. In the latter of these dignities he had attained to the emolument beyond which the average man does not dare to covet; that is, he had thirty-five shillings a week.

He had married his wife very largely because there was no one else who could so easily be married, and she, after attending quite a respectable time, had married him because no one better turned up.

They were both of the people who consider that it is much better to marry than to burn. It was not that any particular urgency of the blood drove them into each other's arms, for they could not have mustered one infantile passion between the two of them. It was that, in their conventions, one married at a certain time after leaving school. It is one of the things one does. They lived on the same tram line; they went to the same church; they attended the same semi-clerical or lay clerical meetings and missions which every church fosters; they were thus continually meeting and at last saluting, and at long last, through the introduction of a clergyman, speaking. He saw her home once; he saw her home again; then he always saw her home.

Why did they go to church? It was not to praise God—they would not have known how to do such a thing. It was not to pray—their characters were not strong enough for such an exercise of intellect and will. They went to church because they had gone there when they were children; because it was the proper thing to do; because church and its implications formed a society in which they could mix, and which rescued them from the feeling of individuality and detachment which can so easily become a sense of utter loneliness and despair.

When two young people have convoyed each other home in the late hours they must do the right thing; that is, they must get married—and so these two got married. Love! There was none of it. Even affection does not seem to be necessary for such a coupling. Of course they had both read the right books, and from these had gleaned that love existed and that affection was a postulate for matrimony. To be loving was, therefore, the right thing to be, and they loved as in duty bound. They said "darling" to each other frequently, and, although less frequently, they clasped each other's hands. Everything was in order, the rules were obeyed to the last one, and they got married.

They had a wedding party—they both saved up for it from their very meagre wages—and to the wedding a dozen people of their own tribe were invited and were regaled on lemonade

and buns; there were other and more notable meats than these. The proper speeches were made; the proper toasts were drained in bubbling and hissing glasses. Everything, they told each other afterwards, went off splendidly, and they went away to a seaside place for six days. Then they returned to the small house they had taken and furnished on the instalment system and thus they were man and wife and the one flesh.

For a week or two they were almost excited. Their meals were no longer solitary. Each night they shared a supper and a bed. They walked arm in arm to church twice every Sunday, and thus enlinked they walked back together and did not separate on arriving at a door. When the morning tea was prepared, she would call out, "Breakfast is ready, darling," and when he was going to work he would say, "Did you notice where I left my hat, darling?"

She did not go to work any more, for that was not the thing, and when he came home in the evening he listened dutifully to the conversation which she had accumulated during a companionless day.

Indeed he sometimes thought she talked for longer than was necessary about the way the kitchen tap dripped. When it was turned off it did not entirely turn off. At first he admired and envied her ease in speech, for he could not at all have uttered so many words about a water tap. He marvelled at her. Each night brought its own subject. It might be about the fading oilcloth on the hall; it might be about cockroaches in the basement; it might be that the silk in her wedding-present umbrella had slit. On these subjects, on all and every subject, she was able to emit unceasing and perfectly grammatical words. He sat with her in the parlour and hearkened diligently to her tale. He would lie silent in the bed and, long after the candle had been blown out, he would stretch beside her in the darkness and would listen, listen, listen. He could not help listening, and the thin sound of his wife's voice began to beat on his ears as something monstrously dull, as an eternal, inexplicable complaint. He almost regretted having got married.

He had a long-haired, thin-grown moustache; he had a badly cut nose; he had dull-blue eyes which stared, as though he were listening with them instead of with his ears; he had as little chin as could be without having any chin at all; his ears swung slightly outwards; the ends of his trousers flopped about his ankles, and from the flop and waggle of these garments one knew that his legs were as skinny as matches; one divined that his elbows were sharp enough to wear a hole through his coat, and that his feet were longish and flattish and that his toes mounted energetically on the top of each other.

One knew that he was less protected against life than a snail is. One knew that one could do anything one pleased to him without fear, and that, unless the thing done was terribly public, he would not even complain. His wife knew it, but she had only blood enough for the little, bitter dislike which flowed from her in a thin, bitter, unceasing sound of words.

He liked everyone in the world; he liked everything in the world. He liked anything. That, if he had an ambition, was all his ambition, to be let like people, to placate people and let them see that he liked them. Never was such a handshake as he gave. It seemed he would never again let go one's fingers. Never did eyes beam on one with such entire assurance that here was good will; that here was one who would be gratified by your good fortune; that here was one who would laugh and perform antics like a dog if that would give you pleasure; that here was one who implored you not to do him harm.

Life flowed on. Three years of the slab of nonsense which he called life went by, and he was alive, a little bonier than before, but with an imperceptible growth of boniness that left him unchanged to himself. He was more eager than ever when he clasped your

hand in both of his own, and clung to it as thinking that here might be safety. On your approach he wagged his tail with so woeful an energy, and his dumb eyes implored you to take him away with you and feed him; to tie him up, if you had the heart to do so, but to take him away with you and not let him stray any longer.

For he was terribly afraid. He had lost all hope, and he saw the end coming to him irresistible as death; he saw the calamity and disaster to which he was fated coming on him implacably, and he wanted to be let off; he wanted a corner where he could lay his bones on straw and blink at the sun. For he was tired; he could no longer work as he used to work. His wife's voice, that unceasing, bitter little drone came between him and his work; it drowned all his thoughts; it destroyed the mere mechanical remembrance which was his work; he could no longer be certain that his tots at the end of the ledger were right; he could not remember the thing which he was told to remember for to-morrow, for she droned into his ear in the middle of the column of figures, and she buzzed at him while his superior was giving him instructions.

The other men began to play pranks on him. They filled his ink-bottle with lumps of blotting paper, so that when he lifted out the pen he would put a two-inch blot on the ledger; they stole his cup at the lunch hour and he found in its place a cup full of red ink; they turned his desk upside down, tore his papers, bashed in his hat, spread gum on his chair. They did everything to him which careless malevolent minds can think of, knowing that as he did not know who to complain of, he would never complain.

Things began to get unbearable; not unbearable for him, for until death came he could bear anything. Things began to get unbearable for his masters. They did not know who played the pranks, but they knew all about the pranks, and his incompetence became more evident, so their speech to him became more short, their looks more dissatisfied. In the face of these things he could return and return, but he could not battle; he could oppose there nothing but his eagerness to please and his dumb eyes.

He saw his dismissal coming, and with it he saw the end of life, the fading away of the green earth and the going out of the sun. He strove against his dismissal with humility, and further than his abjectness humility itself could not go. It was a thing of shame, and God knows he was ashamed. It was obscene, and perhaps God counted his tears as they slid burning and trickling along that gaunt nose into his moustache.

He was dismissed, and he stood before his master as a sheep might stand before its butcher. He listened without a word and went away without a word.

His wife droned and droned and droned. But now it was not only in the night time, that dark cavern of thin unintermitting sound; she had all the day to talk in and all the night, and both the day and the night were filled by her with words.

He fled from the house. He walked up streets and down streets, pushing open shop doors, office doors, and doors of stables and yards, seeking employment, carrying his frightened eyes and his humility into every sort of place and every kind of company. But he might as well have asked for employment from the winds and the waters. There was no employment for him on the earth. There was no place for him under the wide canopy of heaven.

The little money he had managed to save vanished away; the people from whom he had hired his furniture came with a van and took it away again; his wife went away to live with a cousin until she could find work. For a few days and nights he roved about the empty house eating stale crusts that he found, drinking water from the tap, sleeping on the rubbish-littered floor. Then one morning the landlord knocked and asked for the keys. He gave them

and the landlord saw him off the premises. He was in the street, and he had nothing in the world but a pair of spectacles. He stared through them at the clouds; he looked at the clouds fixedly as he paced forward, thinking that maybe he would see God through his spectacles.

HOW LITTLE KNOWS THE CALIPH

By Willard Wattles

ABOVE a street in Bagdad set in the solid wall
There is a latticed window where the checkered sunbeams fall,

A little latticed window that looks upon the street—
And down between the houses comes a lad on sun-browned feet.

Oh, is he from the mountains high, or is he from the sea,
For never caliph trod in state on step so light as he.

Or is he only shepherd boy come in with goats to town,
With lips of the pomegranate flower and pillared throat of brown?

Oh, quick and drop it at his feet, the spicy cassia bud,
And I shall know if ghost he be, or vintaged warm with blood.

Oh, quick and swing the little door that is so straight and small . . .
I weary of my lattices set in a solid wall.

Oh, he has climbed the musty stair, and passed the darkened door,
And kissed the aching from my lips that were numb before.

I did not know that love could be so merciful as this,
Or that a slender shepherd boy could hold so close and kiss,

For now I lie in jewelled arms and marvel hour by hour
How little knows the caliph of my red pomegranate flower.

NO woman is ever really quite "at her best." In her mind there always remains some resource of charm or beauty that is still untapped.

THE woman who has developed an enigmatic, subtle smile needs no other weapon in her conquests.

THE HAPPY HANGMAN

By Harold Brighouse

I

THERE was a king in Naples then and Beppo was his hangman. None of your shamefaced dogs, but as hearty a fellow as ever sent a criminal to Kingdom Come with sound hemp and farewell joke. He hanged like a Christian and a sinner because but for a piece of luck he should have been hanged himself and it made him soft and kindly at his work.

They caught him one day at the trade he used to ply before they made a hangman of him. He was then a pickpocket by profession and the fat merchant whose purse he cut could well afford the trifling loss. But the merchant fell to shouting and raised such a devil of a hullabaloo in the street of Naples that Beppo was caught, though he ran like a hare, for as soon as ten pursuers were winded, twenty with fresh lungs took up the chase, and a man cannot outrun a multitude.

The sniffling wretch who couldn't lose a purse without crying out about it haled him before the magistrates and Beppo was sentenced to the gallows. When they sent for the hangman to come and do his duty, the officer, worn with overwork, was saying his last prayer with the priest and inconveniently died. So they offered Beppo what they called a choice. He could turn hangman and hang others, or he could hang. He preferred to hang others.

It is nearly as unpopular to hang as to be hanged, and Beppo found himself cold-shouldered by his old acquaintances, many of whom feared, with cause, to be one day the raw material of his handicraft. He saved his skin at a price which was heavy on a companionable man, but he hanged the fellows who cut him in the wineshops with Christian pleasantness. A less charitable man would have been churlish with the noose.

If constant occupation makes a man happy, Beppo had luck, for necks fell to his rope like mellow apples on a windy day. There were hangings, and to spare, in Naples then, and fees for Master Beppo, and perquisites as well. He was heir-at-law to whatever the felons had upon them, which, since the warders had first opportunity and nimble fingers, was nothing but their clothes. Still, the clothes were often merchantable and more rarely wearable, and on the surface there were compensations in his trade. But where is the use of fees if a man must drink alone, or of fine clothes when the girls won't look at him who wears them? Beppo was tired of hanging and that's the truth of it.

Besides, there was the matter of Nita. Nita belonged, in a sort of way, to a successful thief called Pietro, and Beppo reckoned himself the better man, which might be truth or only arrogance in a mere pickpocket who had, moreover, turned hangman.

But when Pietro was careless enough to be caught knifing Nita's husband and Beppo hanged him, he did his office with peculiar kindliness, for he was thinking of Nita. That was his mistake. A man should keep his thoughts upon his work. Straying thoughts mean botched work.

Having hanged him, Beppo drew his fee, changed into Pietro's clothes,

which were good and fitted him, and went to see Nita.

She was lying asleep in an upper room with a window that looked out on the sun-filled courtyard, and the sight of her was good. She was like a ripe orange, with a flush beneath her dark skin where the blood ran in her, and at the thought of kissing those lips Beppo was twice a man. She was of Naples, and that says all, except that she was beautiful beyond the wont even of Neapolitans. She lay in her bed under a bright red cloak, tired because she had been up all night in order to get a front place at the hanging of her lover.

Beppo leant over her and she murmured "My Pietro" in her sleep.

"It's easy to see where your thoughts run o' nights," he said. "Pietro's hanged."

She stirred and woke and saw him in Pietro's clothes. Again she said "Pietro," and he laughed.

"But you—" she said, shrinking across the bed from him. "Your clothes. They are Pietro's."

"My clothes are mine," he said.

"They're his. I say they're his. See! Here I mended them."

"What!" said Beppo, disappointed. "Mended clothes!" Then he examined the elbow to which she pointed and found that the mend was neat. "Still, they are mended well. I'm glad to know you have the housewife's arts."

"Who are you? Who are you who come with his clothes on your back?"

"His heir. Heir to his clothes and heir to his—to you. Shall we sit down and talk?"

She recognized him then and shuddered back against the wall.

"You are the hangman."

"You have sharp eyes," he said, well pleased. "It needs sharp eyes to see my face through the mask I wear when I perform my duty to the State. I like you more and more."

He went to her, and saw her cringe from him.

"Come, mistress," he argued, reasonably, "I am a man like other men. A state official, it is true, but I am not on duty now. Sit by me and discover my humanity. Have you no wine to offer me?"

She eyed him defiantly. "There's nothing here for you."

"There's you."

"But not for long," she said, and made a quick rush to the door.

Beppo was quicker and he caught her before she opened it. Wanting her breath for other purposes, she did not scream. She bit his hand and he liked her spirit, but he mastered her and threw her from him into the room, locking the door and smiling gently at her. She thought of the window, but the well was deep and she shuddered back from it.

"Yes, it's a long jump, Nita," he said, looking for himself. "A man like me might jump it and survive, but not a little girl."

She stood there panting.

"You make it very plain you did not love Pietro," he remarked. "He died repentant like a worthy son of Holy Church. You should show your gratitude to me that sent him to a better place than this."

"Does that help me on earth?" she asked.

"I'm here to do that," he said. "Did you say you had no wine?"

Hatred still smouldered in her eyes, but she had wine and got it. She put worlds of contempt into her gesture as she poured it to the cup, but, sullenly, she poured.

"Only one cup?" he asked. "Then we must share it as lovers should. Drink, Nita," he invited her.

"Yes—if my lips could poison you."

He laughed. "But since they won't?"

"You drink alone."

He drank, toasting her eyes. "It is a hangman's fate to drink alone. Men shun me in the wineshops and women look the other way when I pass by. I'm pining for companionship. Hanging's a necessary trade, but lonely, and therefore I come to you to ease my loneliness by sharing it. The fees, I might remark, are good."

"Blood-money."

"Oh, if you like," he said, "but the coins are round like any others and more gold than most. See. This is what I earned to-day."

He fingered gold merrily on the table, and she struck him in the face. He relished the tingle of it and the mischief in her eye.

"You hellish scum! Would you tempt me with the very coin you got for taking Pietro's life?"

"Hoho," he mocked, "I tempt you, then? We'll argue this, my pretty. For instance, why was Pietro hanged? Because he killed your husband and you clung to him for it. For the same reason you should cling to me, because I killed Pietro."

"Pietro killed my husband in the heat of anger. They fought for me with knives and the best man won. You killed Pietro in cold blood as a—a duty to the State."

"True," he argued, "I performed my duty to the State, and I assure you I'd perform my duties as your husband with the same success."

That gave her pause. She had no anger now. "My husband!"

He was very moral then. "Certainly a husband, Nita. A state official has to be respectable!"

"Marry a hangman!" she said contemptuously, but weighed it shrewdly, liking the shape of him.

"You can forget my trade. And you will find me faithful."

"No doubt of that. Women don't want a man like you." Which was not whole truth. They wanted, but they did not dare.

"And men," he pointed out, "will think the same of you. Your record's dangerous. Two men, your husband and Pietro, have died on your account. It takes courage to be the third."

"Oh," she scoffed, "you woo me bravely."

"On the contrary, I have not begun to woo. So far I have appealed to argument."

"To insult," she suggested.

"Only to truth," he amended. "If you were ugly I might lie. I might pretend that you were beautiful, but it is not necessary to lie to you. You're beautiful. I want you for your beauty and because I love you. I never hanged a man with greater kindliness than I hanged Pietro."

"You were not cold about it, then?" she asked eagerly.

"Cold? My fingers trembled, I who have hanged a man a week for years. I hanged him with a rival's sentiment. I lusted to cut his bonds and set him free to fight with me for you."

"What is your name?" she asked.

"Beppo."

"Beppo," she repeated lingeringly, filling the wine-cup.

"Ah, on your lips it sounds the name of names. I never knew it was a fragrant name before."

She drank and offered him the cup. "Drink where I have kissed the cup."

He looked at her with question in his eyes and saw the answer in hers. Swiftly he drank, then sat and put her on his knee. They kissed and kissed as if their lips could never part.

"Now I can defy the world. Let come what may, I have held you in my arms and had your lips to mine."

"I've dreamed of finding love like this," she said.

There was the sudden sound of horses in the courtyard and the strangeness of it in that quarter of the town came first to her who lived there. She fretted in his clasp.

"Sit still," he bade her. "Horses are not so strange as that we've found each other," and she sank back happily. They kissed again and made love and cooed into each other's ears.

"I love your roughness and the strength that mastered me."

"I have not lived till now. To-day I am alive. No longer lonely and outcast, but a man who's found his mate, greater than other men because the mate is you: a giant for I have your love: inviolate because you love me—"

A knocking came at the door, and Beppo did not care. His world was in the room.

"Go on," he mocked, "knock till your knuckles ache. Shout till your bellows burst."

They knocked again and called his name, alarming Nita.

"They know you're here," she said.

"I know you're here," he said. "That's all I've room to know."

"Open," they cried, "in the name of the law."

The law? He heard a greater call than law. He heard the call of love and happiness. They could shout, those pigmies of the world. He snapped his fingers at them, looking at Nita, who was his world.

"Beppo, am I to break the door down? You know my voice—Calandro of the jail. I've news for you."

"News of the jail," he roared back. "News of the damned. Take it to hell and tell it there. This is a part of Paradise."

Another voice came from behind the locked door, and at it Nita flinched and slipped from Beppo's arms.

"*That voice!*" she said, and her face was bloodless and she shivered.

"Give me the key." He gave it her. She had no need to ask twice in such a tone. She opened the door.

With Calandro, jailer, was the hanged lover of Nita, in a nightshirt.—

II

She screamed at sight of him and shrank away. Beppo himself gave back a step. It was new in his experience for hanged men to walk.

"Are you a ghost?" he asked.

"As cold as one," said Pietro. "Give me my clothes."

At that Calandro interposed and explained. "Beppo, you hanged him like a bungler"—that was the worst of a servant of the law indulging his private passion: hangmen should be dispassionate—"we took the body in the usual way to the doctors and on the road the fellow stirred. By the time we were at the hospital, he sat up. The doctors gave him cordial, and, as you see, the man's recovered."

"And waiting to be covered," said Pietro. "Give me my clothes."

The right of the matter seemed with Pietro, not to mention the charity. A man who has survived hanging and a ride through the streets in a hospital nightshirt deserves clothes, especially his own clothes. They were the hangman's perquisite on the theory that the hanged had no further use for them, and Pietro had a use. Pietro was cold.

"It's simple impudence to claim your perquisite after fumbling your job like this," he said.

"You're the last man to complain of that," said Beppo.

"Am I? Why, but for your lubberliness I'd now be on the way to Paradise. The priest told me himself he'd never witnessed a better repentance."

"Then come and be hanged again," suggested the botcher. "I promise you I'll not be careless twice." He opened the door in invitation.

The jailer intervened.

"That is the point which the lawyers are now considering," he said. "Pietro was sentenced to be hanged, and he has been hanged."

"Not thoroughly."

"No. It's a nice question. As I am myself a humble student of the law, I can see that the problem bristles with difficulties. Can a man be hanged twice for the same crime? Is Pietro, having been hanged, properly a man at all? Has he legal existence? And, if not, can he be said to exist in any shape? Ought he to be quietly killed and hidden away as an unnatural monstrosity? Or ought he to be ignored and permitted to live? Can we restore civil rights to a man who is legally dead, or is he an outlaw? Is he—"

Pietro tired of the pedantry of the law.

"I tell you what I am," he said. "I'm cold."

"I am not even certain," said Calandro, "that you have the right to feel cold, but by the clemency of the Council you are allowed to claim your clothes."

"Is he?" said Beppo. "Claiming is one thing. Receiving is another."

"I should not advise you to be arrogant, Beppo," said Calandro quietly. "Your own position is also under consideration by the lawyers. They are deliberating what is to be done with a hangman who makes a fool of the law. You have given them a very pretty problem, my friend."

"Then they ought to be grateful."

"Oh, they are. They revel in a complicated case. But it may be necessary to hang you at the end of their revels."

"To hang me?" asked Beppo, taken aback. "But why?"

The jailer was sympathetic.

"Personally, I should regret it," he said. "But don't you realize that you have brought the law into contempt? The law relies upon your skill in hanging and you have betrayed the law. No doubt it was an accident, but there is no place in law for accidents. I can only tell you that I left the Council laughing very heartily when an old equity lawyer suggested that the best plan was to make Pietro hangman in your place to see if he could not make a better job of hanging you than you have made of him."

"So as the matter stands," said Pietro, "we're both in danger of our lives."

The legalist considered it. "One of you is in danger of his life, but which one is a matter not decided yet."

Pietro looked at Beppo like a friend. They belonged to the rascal's side of the fence, Calandro to the other. For a purpose they could form alliance.

"Hangman," he said, "this fellow's tedious."

"He splits too many hairs," Beppo agreed, seizing Calandro. They two could settle this without the law, and put the door between them and the law.

Calandro in the passage howled out threats and called on Beppo to keep the peace. He reminded him that he was an officer of the law. Beppo resigned his office through the door.

"You can't resign," said Calandro. "You're appointed for life."

Beppo laughed, and the jailer went for help. Pietro turned the key in the door with an ugly look that Beppo did not see because he was pouring wine for Pietro. He had not perceived that the alliance, made for a purpose, was already broken and the allies turned enemies.

"Pietro," he said fraternally, "for a man that's had your escape, you're in a gloomy mood. Cheer up! Here's wine to help you."

Pietro knocked the wine-cup from his hand. "I do not drink with hangmen," he said.

"Mere prejudice," said Beppo, too used to that affront to be angry. "And, if it comes to that, you're in jeopardy of turning hangman yourself."

Pietro ignored it and restated his claim.

"My breeches!" he demanded. "I am cold."

"*My* breeches," corrected Beppo.

"*Ours*, if you like, but give them me to wear."

"No. That admits your ownership, which I deny."

"Oh," said Pietro whimsically. "I'll admit your ownership, if you'll admit my legs."

"I stand upon my rights," said Beppo, loftily.

Pietro corrected that.

"You stand upon my boots," he said, "but if you have no mind to do a charitable act—"

"Charity!" cried Beppo. "Why in God's name should I feel charitable to a man who's put my life in peril by declining to die?"

"Then," said Pietro, "will you take a sportsman's chance and spin a coin for it?"

"You will lose," he said. "I warn you I'm lucky to-day."

"The same with me," said Pietro, "which makes the matter more interesting. My luck brought me past the gallows and should carry me to a pair of breeches. You'll find a copper in the left-hand pocket."

The light-fingered turnkeys had the

copper, but Beppo produced gold and Pietro eyed it queerly.

"Transmuted, eh?" he said. "I have the discretion not to ask about the process, but I may guess you have not fairly earned that gold. I'm still alive. I call it heads," he added as Beppo tossed the coin.

Tails fell, and Pietro took it with philosophy.

"Lucky at play, unlucky at love," he quoted. "That for yourself, Hangman. Meantime, I like the colour of this cloak. Blood also is red."

He took the bright cloak from the bed and gathered it round him. "Now to our quarrel."

III

Beppo's eyes confessed his admiration. Here was a fellow who had spent the night in the condemned cell, had gone through the strain of a last confession, been hanged, carried naked to the hospital, and from there as good as naked to this house, and still had fight in him. Small wonder he survived the noose. It was magnificent, but it was absurd, for Beppo had kissed Nita. He was uplifted and indomitable, but he could pity Pietro, who had lost what he had gained, and the winning of the toss awoke the gambling fever. As he gambled for the breeches, he would gamble for Nita, to spare Pietro the pains of a losing fight.

So far they had ignored Nita, who kept herself apart, and Beppo put the matter tactfully. He made play with the coin again.

"If there is anything between us two," he said, "which the toss has not decided, let us call a second time."

It is decent to be tactful about breeches: a mistress is another matter.

"*If* there is anything," cried Pietro. "Did you imagine I'd forgotten where we found you, with Nita who tries to hide and skulks there in the shade?"

She came between them angrily. "I have not hidden in the shade. Your squabble for a suit of clothes was no affair of mine."

"We've finished that," he said, "and can begin with you. Nita, you love too lightly. You thought me cold this bare half hour and welcomed the hangman."

Beppo was watching her. He wanted to see how she would rise to this occasion of a lover returned from the gallows, spewed out by Hell, and he liked the challenge of her. She stood poised on the balls of her feet, swaying a little with arms akimbo in the attitude which is either a coarse virago's or a thing of grace, and Nita did it with an air that pleased him. She had spunk, this woman of his.

"I'm free to welcome whom I choose," she said defiantly.

Pietro raised his fist, but let it drop again, surprised because she did not flinch. She used to flinch, and then he used to strike.

"While I'm alive you're mine," he said. "By every right of God and man, you're mine. I've loved you and I've fought for you. I've killed for you. This carrion here has failed to kill me, though he had me pinioned and only had to put a rope around my neck and pull it tight."

"For all that, you were less helpless than I was," said Beppo, and Pietro stared at him. "Cords do not bind a man as tightly as a woman's eyes. I've never failed to hang a man before. I failed this time because I cared. I saw her and I hated you. I let my private feelings get the better of my skill. Put me before you, man to man, knives in our hands, and I will undertake to give you as good account of you as you gave of Luigi for her sake."

"You're boasting, Hangman."

"No," smiled Beppo, more at Nita than at him, as if they two had a secret beyond the comprehension of the other, "neither a boaster nor a hangman now. I resign my office to you."

"It's almost worth it, for the pleasure of hanging you."

"Only," said Beppo, "I shall not stay here to be hanged. My next appointment is not with Death. It is with Love."

"You'll miss it, then."

But Beppo only smiled. "No living man can hurt me now."

"Son of a bachelor, you boast. No living man, you say? The lawyers sit to learn if I'm alive or not. Perhaps, Hangman, I am not a living man." And Pietro snatched from the table the only knife it held.

Beppo went to the window. The height was giddy but he saw with satisfaction that Calandro had left the second horse in the courtyard. He thought it looked a likely racer. He thought of freedom and the frontier and the knife in Pietro's hand did not trouble him.

Pietro sprang and Nita shrieked in time. The aim was for his stomach, but Beppo turned and caught the eager hand and squeezed it till the knife fell from the bloodless fingers and rattled on the floor. Pietro twisted like an eel and tried to trip his adversary. They fell, and the table with them, and grappled for each other's throats. A man of parts, this Pietro, who after all could make Beppo call out his strength.

Fierce knocks were heard at the door and then Calandro called, like a fool, "Beppo, you are to surrender to the law. It orders you to die and Pietro is your executioner!"

Beppo laughed loud. He was too busy to come and be killed. Nor was he killing, though he might have done. Pietro won too much regard for that. He rose, and when he rose Pietro rose with him, struggling but helpless, and was held on high until such time as Beppo needed him.

"Go to the window, Nita," he commanded her as the men outside began to break the door.

Wise generals throw out a scout, but Calandro lacked strategy and entered first through the shattered panels. Beppo threw something at him, hard. He threw Pietro, and a tangled mass seemed mixed forever on the floor. The warders skirted it and made for Beppo.

With Nita in his arms, he jumped and fell into the courtyard, a madman's leap, but rose immune.

Calendro scrambled to his feet.

"He's killed himself," he said, and went to look.

A happy laugh saluted him. Beppo had Nita on the horse and the sound of galloping hooves rang through the room. Quickly the sound was lost.

Pietro kept his wits. In a chase he, too, might balk the law.

"After them! After them!" he cried, struggling with the guards.

"No," said Calandro, "hold him fast. The lawyers must hear of this and sit again." He scratched his head with a fat hand. "I wonder what they will do now?"

IF a woman smiles at a man, he thinks she is enamoured by him. If a man smiles at a woman, she thinks he suspects her.

THE only kind of letters a woman likes to receive from a man are those that should not be written.

LOVE SONG

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

I HAVE read love-stories,
By Lilith Benda, Mary J. Holmes, Theodore Dreiser, Chas. Garvice, Harry Leon Wilson, Robert W. Chambers, W. L. George, and a host of others,
And, as I have read them, I have thought,
"This writer has loved, and suffered,
Otherwise, how could he (or she) delineate passion so accurately?"

I have read love-poems,
By Shakespeare, Harry Kemp, Sir Richard Lovelace, Robert W. Service, Swinburne, John McClure, Albert Symons, and innumerable more,
And, as I have read them, I have thought,
"This writer has loved, and gloried in its ecstasy.
Otherwise, how could he (or she) sing such beautiful praises of his (or her) beloved?"

I love you, Dearest,
And all those scribblers who have been writing about love,
They don't begin to describe it, baby, they don't *begin* to describe it!

LADY OF DELIGHT

By John McClure

THAT time between the winter and the spring
When winds are wanton and the joyous earth,
Drunken with daisies and with birds a-wing,
Smiles in her labour, bringing buds to birth—
That time I found you, and my heart became—
Sudden as laughter—full of merry dreams,
Full of merry fancies, music like a flame—
Music that shall die not, better than it seems!
Then grew I merry, and am merry still
Like the periwinkles whose name is like a song—
I am very gay, my dear, and I think I will
Nevermore be solemn my life long.
I am very gay, by day and night,
Gay to have found you, lady of delight!

THE LYRIC LOVE AFFAIR OF LUCIEN LA CROSS

By Margaret E. Sangster

I

HE used to see her, almost every day, on the five-thirty-five. A slender bit of a girl, she was, with fluffy blond hair and great brown eyes, and hats that showed a tendency to dip down—just at the most interesting moment—and hide her face. And always, for she arrived at the train before Lucien—who caught trains on the narrowest sort of a margin—she could be found sitting in the very same seat, busily writing on a fat yellow pad with the stubbiest of pencils.

Lucien La Cross had gone through some twenty-five years of life without discovering that he possessed an imagination. But somehow, after watching the girl for a preliminary two weeks, Lucien discovered that he was mildly curious about her. He had just made that discovery when the girl, looking up, bit at the end of her stubby pencil and smiled—albeit absently. Lucien La Cross sitting across the narrow aisle, felt a peculiar warmth in the region of his heart (or, at least, he thought he did). And he immediately discovered that he was wildly curious instead of mildly curious. And then the dropping hat-brim came down and hid the absent little smile.

The next night Lucien tried to arrive, early, at the five-thirty-five. But the girl was there, first, busily writing. Lucien, hesitating in the doorway, decided that he would sit in the seat directly behind her, instead of in the one across the aisle. Having a recently discovered bump of curiosity, he couldn't help wondering what she wrote about.

The girl was absorbed in her work. Lucien, by leaning forward, saw that she was writing short lines, and that each one began with a capital letter.

Lucien decided that it was poetry, and gave a sigh of unbelief. The girl looked too sane to be a writer of poetry! Diligently he tried to read his paper, but his curiosity was too intense. He folded the paper and leaned forward as far as he dared, until he could read the scribbled lines.

"The weary world was drenched in snow (he read),
The howling wolves crept gauntly near—
I shuddered—but I clasped you close—
Your sigh came faintly to my ear. . . ."

"The weary world—"

Lucien La Cross broke off disgustedly. For it was a vividly clear day—and warm! Why should anyone write such—Lucien La Cross was going to say rot—but just then a strand of fluffy blond hair trailed softly out from under the drooping brim of the great hat, and Lucien made up poetry himself—quite unconsciously—until the train stopped at his station.

With a backward glance at the girl, who went to some farther-along station, Lucien left the train. The girl continued to write.

"The weary world was drowned in tears—(she wrote);
You nestled—"

II

Lucien La Cross, in the daytime, did routine work in a large factory. He was well paid, and clever, and his position was a position to be set-up about, but nevertheless Lucien La Cross was slightly more than an efficient cog in a well-greased machine. Perhaps that was why Lucien had never come in contact with a great deal of poetry. And yet Lucien—the efficient cog—took to buying magazines and bringing them home with him. He bought æsthetic magazines that made a point of going in for poetry, because he felt sure that a blond girl with great brown eyes would have her verses published only in such magazines. He looked, but vainly, for a poem beginning, "The weary world was drenched in snow—" Also for others that he had glimpsed on succeeding nights — others that told of

"Mutely wailing eyes of flame—and
April, decked with vagrant blossoms, and
Arms that lure me, touch me, clutch me—
Arms as white and warm as—"

Lucien had, in that instance, lost the last word, for the girl wrote a most illegible hand! He tried to think of something white and warm, comparable to arms, but he couldn't.

And then, one day, the unexpected happened. For, coming into the train, Lucien found that every seat was occupied—every seat but one. And in the other half of that seat a girl was sitting—a girl who wrote busily on a yellow pad with a stubby pencil.

With a mumbled word that was half apology, Lucien slid into the seat and buried his head in the folds of his newspaper. A just out, vellum-bound quarterly of verse lay on his knees. How should he know that, under the girl's yellow pad, there lurked a very popular magazine, vividly covered? How should he know that said volume would have set his mind quite at rest in regard to "arms as white and warm as—"?

The girl wrote fast and interestedly. And habit is an insistent thing. As the train, puffing great wreaths of black smoke, drew out of the station yards, Lucien darted a glance at the yellow pad. There was a new poem on it—

"I, all alone in the dark of my solitude—
Long for the kisses of yore that I knew! (wrote the girl flamboyantly)—
I, in the anguish and hush of my tower room,
Long for the dearness, the nearness, of you!"

Lucien read it and was beginning on the second stanza when he became conscious that the rapidly moving, though stubby pencil, had paused. And then, all at once, a slender hand flashed down over the writing on the yellow pad. Lucien, looking up, gazed into two large, indignant brown eyes. He started to speak, thought better of it, and buried his head again in his newspaper.

The next night Lucien sat again in the seat behind the girl. He slipped in noiselessly, but the girl, who had really been quite aware of Lucien for some weeks, knew that he was there. And when, by the rustling of his paper, she knew that he was leaning forward to read over her shoulder, she wrote:

"How, I wonder, can I have
Privacy—
With a fool, directly back,
Watching me?"

There was another verse, but Lucien La Cross did not read it. With scarlet ears and anger gnawing furiously in the region of his heart (or so he thought) he tramped off to the smoking car.

And for some extraordinarily queer reason, the girl was sorry that she had made him angry.

III

Romance dies hard, particularly when one is some twenty-five years of age. Lucien La Cross sulked for two days, purposely missing the five-thirty-

five, but in the end, goaded on by a strangely lonesome feeling, he wandered into the train and seated himself opposite the girl. He knew, from experience, that he could not trust himself to sit behind her, for the temptation of that flying pencil was so keen that it could not be thrust away. The girl, almost too absorbed in her work, was writing, but her cheeks were pinker than usual. It was she who glanced over, several times, during the trip, at Lucien. It was she who appeared half-sorry. For Lucien La Cross, quite swathed in volumes of newspaper and quarts of wounded pride, cursed out all girls, and one girl in particular. But he wondered if she were looking and —what she was writing to-night.

When he got out of the train at his station he stalked past her seat with dignity. Who could know that it required severe mental concentration to keep his eyes straight ahead?

After he left the train, the girl wrote a bit of vers libre. When one is troubled, vers libre, being rhymeless, is the easiest thing to write.

"I do not know him (wrote the girl),
But he has blue eyes
And hair as black
As midnight—
And he walks angrily
As a young god
Serene in his wrath.
And I know that he
Hates—"

The girl stopped, for Lucien La Cross was attractive—for a commuter, and she disliked the words that she knew she should write.

As for Lucien La Cross—well, that evening he called on a girl who laughed when he spoke of poetry and began every sentence with "Listen."

And, after he had gone home, at an uninterestingly proper time, he went to bed and dreamed of—well, he dreamed!

IV

And so progressed the lyric love affair of Lucien La Cross. Not that Lucien knew that it was a love affair—no, indeed! He only knew that he couldn't concentrate on his work, and that his boss was beginning to criticize, and that his very young assistant was beginning to look too darn hopeful. He only knew that it was something to be desired to see Her every night, that it was a bit tragic when he didn't see her. He only knew that his calling list had diminished perceptibly, and that he couldn't have told whether the new stenographer in his office was a blond or a brunette. He only knew that he wished little hats were stylish. And he only wondered whether she wrote the poems to somebody in particular, or whether she just made 'em up out of her own head. She didn't look like a girl with a past, or an unhappy love affair, or a blighted life. And yet, sometimes, her verse hinted at just such strange things. Lucien wondered, and didn't even know that it was a bad sign.

As for the girl, well, girls are emotionally more clever than men. Particularly girls with vivid imaginations. The girl wondered whether Lucien was married, or engaged, what his name was, where he worked and what he did there, whether he ate onions, and who darned his socks. Girls are like that. But, being a girl, she knew that it was a bad sign—and she resolutely tried to put her wonderings behind her.

So it went on. Every night Lucien La Cross decided to sit in the smoking car, and every night, eventually, found him seated not too far from the girl. He noticed the way that the conductor smiled at her as he punched her ticket and envied him—he noticed her curious absorption and never guessed that it was partly ill-concealed embarrassment. He wondered feverishly, at times, whether he dared speak to her, and found himself growing cold at the thought. Once she dropped her small handkerchief and picked it up herself hurriedly, while he scrambled in the aisle. So it went on.

And then one day Lucien La Cross, for the first time, heard her speak. It was to the conductor that she spoke.

"This," she said very pleasantly—

"this is the last time that you'll punch my ticket!" Her voice was soft and low and musical.

The conductor rested a large hand on the red plush back of a seat and regarded her with sorry eyes.

"*No!*" he ejaculated—"You don't mean that you're not going to commute any more!"

The girl dimpled.

"I'm moving to the city," she told him, "to-morrow."

Lucien felt something unpleasant clutch at his heart. The feeling was not unlike indigestion. *She* was going—going out of his life! He might never see her again. Wild thoughts leaped into his mind—thoughts that had to do with ways and means—thoughts that were too impractical to live. He was sitting a few seats behind her on the same side of the car, and he fumed inwardly at the fate that had placed him where he could see only the back of her neck and the tip of one small ear.

The conductor passed on and the girl went back to her writing. Lucien La Cross knew that he was watching her write poetry for the last time, and he choked back something that caught at his throat.

Suddenly, blindingly, he knew that he cared—cared for a girl that he had never met—a girl whose very name was a mystery. Lucien, for the first time in his life, felt the tragedy of a crushed heart.

The train slowed down at his station. The girl was writing, her head bent low over her pad—writing very fast, as if against time. *She did not raise her head as the train stopped.* Lucien La Cross, with an all-gone feeling in the pit of his stomach, rose slowly from his seat, walked unhappily down the aisle. At the door he hesitated, turned, looked back, but the girl was still writing. Lucien, cut to the very soul, stepped out on the station platform.

He could see her very plainly through the window. He could see the tendril of her hair that touched one pink cheek, the droop of her eyelashes, the slenderness of the white fingers that guided the flying stubby pencil. He could see her very plainly—and perhaps he would never see her again. . . .

The train whistled. The conductor jumped for the sluggishly moving step. And all at once the girl was galvanized into action. Swiftly she flung up the car window beside her, ruthlessly she crumpled the paper she had been writting on into a ball—and then, as the astonished Lucien watched her, she smiled and threw the ball straight at him. And then the train swept past.

Lucien La Cross stood quite stupidly on the station platform. It was a full minute before he stooped to pick up the ball of crumpled yellow paper. He unfolded it almost reverently and saw, with a sudden throb of comprehension, that there was something written on it, and that the something was not poetry.

"I often," he read, "do things on impulse. If I took time to think it over, I wouldn't be writing this note. I've been sorry for ever so long about the—about my rudeness to you. I've wanted to apologize. I've felt you watching me and I've wished that there weren't conventions so that we might speak, might know each other, might— I'm moving to the city to-morrow. But, perhaps—"

And there the note stopped abruptly with a long, sputtering pencil mark.

Lucien knew that she had been forced to stop then, because the train was starting—had been forced to stop without telling him her name, and her address. If he had been a tiny boy he would have wailed out his grief, there on the station platform. But he was a man, so he squared his shoulders and thrust the crumpled paper into his most inside waistcoat pocket, and looked up the long track at the far-disappearing speck that was a train.

V

THE next night the girl's place on the train was empty—the next night after that it was still empty, and the next, and the next. Lucien La Cross felt

suddenly bereft, felt years older, felt crushed with the weight of his secret sorrow. At the end of the week he could no longer endure the loneliness. He sought the smoking car, where he puffed furiously at a degenerate pipe and thought dark thoughts.

Life looked very dismal, indeed, for Lucien La Cross told himself that he would never see her again. And then one night, in desperation, he went to call on the girl who laughed when he spoke of poetry and began every sentence with "Listen." He found her at home, reading busily. She was reading a very popular magazine with a vivid cover.

"Where've you been?" she asked Lucien as he shook her limp hand. "My, but you're the little stranger!" And then as Lucien sat down, rather wearily, across the room she laughed—

"Listen," she said, "if you're as interested as you used to be in poetry, here's one for you." And she began to read from the magazine with the vivid cover.

"The weary world," she read between giggles, "was drenched in snow—The howling wolves crept gauntly near—"

Lucien was half-way across the room. His face was alight.

"What's the name signed to that?" he questioned in a curiously grating voice.

The girl who laughed was surprised. She had never seen Lucien so interested before. She pointed with a pink forefinger to the signature.

"She writes often for this book," she told him. "I don't see how she gets away with it! Here"—she extracted a second magazine from a pile on the table beside her—"here's another of hers. Listen—" and again she read—

"*I do not know him*—" through a mist the words came to Lucien.

> "But he has blue eyes
> And hair as black
> As midnight—"

It's funny stuff that, isn't it?" said the girl who laughed. "They call it free verse—"

Lucien felt himself blushing.

VI

THE next morning at exactly nine o'clock Lucien La Cross removed the receiver nervously from his desk telephone. Who could know that he had been waiting an hour for the opening-time of a certain magazine! He gave a number stutteringly to Central, but when he spoke, after a minute, his voice was firm.

"A friend of mine," he said nonchalantly into the black mouthpiece, "writes poems for you. She moved recently and I haven't her new address. Perhaps you can tell it to me. Her name is—"

Fate turned a page in the book of Life and began on the last stanza of a poem. Fate chuckled.

ONE of the greatest pleasures in life is the feeling that we could, if we wished, break all our solemn promises.

A MAN'S first love is always his most perfect. This is because he has no other loves to compare it with.

RUSE

By June Gibson

I

A YOUNG fawn was seen in the copse.

Each day the fawn drank of a cool spring in the wood.

A hunter dug a deep hole near the spring and covered it over with leaves and fresh moss.

II

A gay little bird liked to splash about in the shallow pool.

He feared the large topaz cat with the green eyes and long whiskers that roamed about the garden.

The topaz cat hid among the wistaria vines till the gay little bird became daring.

III

There was a pale-faced little woman who loved a man.

The man was sought by women more beautiful than Helen of Troy, women of greater charm than the Goddess Venus, women more fascinating than the Nile-woman Cleopatra. . . .

The pale-faced little woman ignored him.

SUMMER STORM

By Sara Teasdale

THE panther wind
  Leaps out of the night,
The snake of lightning
  Is twisting and white,
The lion of thunder
  Roars—and we
Sit still and content
  Under a tree—
We have met fate together
  And love and pain,
Why should we fear
  The wrath of the rain!

THE MAN WITH ONE WIFE

By Ben Hecht

I

THERE are moments in every man's life when the consciousness of sin penetrates his sophistication and causes him to suffer. Hardened though he be, cynical of the moral standards of his fellow-men, into the innermost solitude of his being the nausea of guilt yet manages to creep. And then, for the moment, he stands face to face with himself and knows himself as the gods he has denied and forsworn know him.

Thus Ezra Gimmil sat in the thirty-seventh year of his life staring out of the window of his home at the mountain which, like an eternal guardian, shut out the world from Provo, the city of his birth. He was a tall, gaunt man; a headstrong, cynically abandoned man. And yet, as he sat before the window gazing out upon the serene mountain, upon the lazy streets that stretched themselves under the afternoon sun, upon the low roofs and the quiet order of Provo, the torment which seeks men out who crudely fancy they have hidden themselves from God, came into his heart.

He thought, as he sat motionless as some awkwardly carven image, of his father and his father's father, and of his mothers, plump and gentle women. They had all been pious, law-abiding. The name Gimmil had always been one of the prides of Provo. And now, here was he, Ezra Gimmil, a pariah among the righteous, an affliction in the thought of the godly.

In the midst of his thinking the door opened and a woman of twenty-five entered. Her hair was black and her face full. Her figure was strong and undulant. She stood regarding him for a space and then with a deep, curious laugh, moved toward him.

"Why so sad, Ezra?" she asked.

The sound of her voice fell across his emotion like a whip. He brought himself slowly to his feet. Here was the cause of his disgrace, here the reason for the disfavour which had overtaken the name of Gimmil. She it was who had caused him to deny the teachings of God, to fly in the face of his townspeople. Were it not for her and the insidious spell she exercised over him he would have married Martha Dale and Eva Dale. Yes, he could have taken to himself Martha and Eva and Ruth and Mary, all of them beautiful and pious women who would have helped him to live properly in the eyes of God and of his fellow-men, who would have reflected righteousness and glory upon his name, and by whom he would have had children, twenty, thirty, children, as the Prophet of the Mormons had bade to be.

She it was, standing now before him, who had placed her plump arms about his neck and in exchange for a sterile kiss caused him to sell his soul to the Devil. A hardened, malignant, headstrong sinner, Ezra Gimmil, yet as he stared at her he hated her and hated himself. He saw himself as the contemptible renegade whose name was fast becoming a byword in Utah.

"Get away!" he cried out to her. "Get away and leave me be!"

The woman who was his wife only smiled at him. She knew these periodic tempers of his. Slowly she continued to approach him. How much

longer she would be able to hold him in the coils of her passion she could not tell. But, womanlike, she managed to smile most when thinking most bitterly. With tender, cautious strength she pulled him back into the chair.

"What is it, husband?" she asked softly. "Do you no longer love me? Do I no longer make recompense for the frowns of your neighbours?"

Her arms once more encircled him and upon his lips she fastened hers. Closing his eyes and his senses to the power of the woman, Ezra murmured, as in desperation,

"My father was a good man in the eyes of his God and his people. He had twelve wives. His father, who was among the first to come to Provo, had fourteen wives. And I, who bear their name, live in sin with one wife, live in defiance of all that is holy and pure."

Slowly, with eyes flashing, Ezra's wife removed her lips from his. She, too, was a Mormon and, like her husband, given to sudden outbreaks of conscience. Well she knew the emotions which the Elders of the church entertained toward her husband, the manner in which the Apostles raised their eyes in scorn and prayer when he passed. Was it worth while, after all, this life of defiance? Would not, as the Elders preached, retribution, terrible and complete, overtake both of them?

Miama Gimmil sighed and straightened her body. As long as her husband spoke not of this thing, no thought of it came to disturb her. But seeing him lost in the torments which God sends to sinners, Miama too felt the still, small voice of conscience speaking faintly and divinely in her soul of souls. Silently she fell to her knees before her husband.

"Go," she whispered brokenly. "It is your . . . your duty."

Her head fell into the lap of Ezra Gimmil and she wept.

And here, in order to understand and appreciate the sinister convolutions of Ezra Gimmil's thought, one must understand and appreciate the first great principle of all great egoists and sinners—no man to himself can long remain vile. Thus, although he had opened his heart for the moment to the consciousness of sin, Ezra Gimmil was not stirred out of the ways of evil by the shock. He had during this moment of spiritual illumination seen to the bottom of his being. With tortured senses he had observed his transgressions as if with the eyes of God Himself. But of so coarse a fibre is the soul of man, of so virile a substance the natural evil once it comes uppermost, that it can with the agility of a duck's back shed the holiest of waters and the purest of thoughts.

Conscious of his returning weakness, aware of his renunciation of God and purity, Ezra Gimmil slowly gave himself over to the unhallowed tumult beginning to stir in his bosom. He felt, as he had on the day of his wedding in the Temple of Provo, the insidious lure of Miama. For a moment there circled in the back of his thought the vision of the Elder Dale and his thirty-seven daughters. But he put this last effort of his fading virtue from him. An expression of unholy rapture lighted his narrow, evil eyes. His lips parted in a wild laugh. Truly as he stood inanimate for an instant facing his one wife, he was Ezra Gimmil as the elect of Provo deemed him, a man possessed by the Evil One, immune to the gospels, oblivious to the laws of decency and righteousness.

"Miama," he cried aloud, "come, I have love for you. And only you. What does it matter, the obloquy of the world? I shall brook no other to trespass upon our home. Let them cast me out. We shall go forth together, sinners in truth, but with the light of freedom in our hearts. What are the laws of God and of man compared to the laws of the heart? Miama, my own, tell me you do not wish for any wifely companions?"

A curious, abandoned note came into his voice, a wilder gleam into his eye. He raised his gaunt arm and shook it at

the mountain that guarded the city of his birth, at the Temple wherein his fathers had worshipped.

"Miama," he cried, "we will live as one, you and I. And there shall be no other."

For a space Miama Gimmil shuddered before the violent sacrilege of her husband. Into her heart crept a dread. What manner of demon was this, her Ezra, to defy God and his people? What ominous retribution would overtake him? And her? Dared she continue?

Then, suddenly, all that was female in her made answer. With a joyous cry she hurled herself into her husband's arms.

And it was at this significant instant that the Elder Brigham Dale passed the front windows of the home of Ezra Gimmil. The Elder Dale was a man advanced in years, white-bearded and with the stateliness which long virtue and long worship of the true God alone can give a man. He was short and heavy through the chest and stomach. But his legs were firm and his eyes clear and vigorous.

And thus, passing the windows of Ezra Gimmil's home at this particular instant, he was able to see that which sent a shock into the depths of his being. There before him, shamelessly embraced in each other's arms, standing in the same light which shone upon the Temple, were the wanton Miama and the apostate Ezra.

Thirty-seven daughters had the Elder Dale, each of them a plump and gentle maiden. And nine wives had the Elder Dale, each of them a pious and wondrous helpmeet. The youngest of his daughters was six and the oldest of them thirty and two of them were betrothed and two of them were married and thirty-three of them awaited to be taken by good Mormons.

Raising his eyes the Elder murmured a prayer, which in his anger and horror he was unable to complete. He had known the father of Ezra Gimmil. He had known the wives of his father. All of them pious, scrupulous Mormons. And he, himself, had reared thirty-seven daughters. Ingrate, renegade, servant of Satan! The Elder Dale shook his fist at the two embraced figures. Then, overpowered by his emotions, he dashed up the steps of Ezra Gimmil's home and burst into the room wherein the couple still stood. His first words separated the twain like some blow delivered from on high.

"Monogamist!" he shouted in his deep voice. "For this have we and your fathers led you into the true ways of God! For this! To be betrayed by you! To watch you flaunt your evil in our faces! To abide with you whilst you disown the fruits of our work! Where are your wives? Where are your pledges to the Apostles? Answer me, monogamist!"

Miama, at the sound of the booming voice of the Elder, slipped coweringly toward the opposite wall. In her face shame burned and her eyes were filled with terror. In this moment the teachings of her childhood, the holy things learned at her mother's knee, rushed to the surface, and raising her eyes she waited for God to strike.

Then, as the Elder continued to speak, she stole a glance at her husband. Ezra was standing with his head thrown back, his lips thrust forth in a snarl. She watched the Elder approach him slowly. She heard the Elder talking now in a calmer voice, an appealing voice.

"Ezra Gimmil, the Apostles of the Temple have appointed me to speak with you. Are you of a mood to listen?"

Indeed, for one so outraged and violent but a moment before, a curious change had come over the Elder. It had, moreover, its effect upon the apostate.

Shaking his head slowly, Ezra Gimmil answered,

"What speech can there be between us, Elder? You see me as I am, as I wish to be. What more can I say?"

There was a note of sorrow in the voice of Ezra Gimmil, which the Elder was quick to hear.

"Come with me to the Temple," the Elder went on more calmly than before. "And we shall see what is to be seen. Better than that, come with me to my home. Provo has not abandoned you, my son, though you have abandoned it in your soul. Provo still remembers your father and his father. None fought so valiantly for the Saints, none worked so faithfully as they. Your sisters themselves will speak for that. Come with me to my home, Ezra, my son, and I will show you to my daughters. I am not one to condemn in sudden anger the waywardness of youth."

A cloud came upon Ezra Gimmil's features. He continued to shake his head.

"No," he answered, "it cannot be. It will not avail for me to look upon your daughters."

II

THE home of Elder Brigham Dale was divided into nine houses. Therein, in peace and humanly orchestrated harmony, lived his extensive issue. In the heart of the town of Provo were two stores which the Elder owned. He was, because of his good works and his reputed wealth, a man of power in the place and for six years he had held a council seat. His thirty-seven daughters were indeed as so many fair monuments to his piety.

But together with the blessings which had been given him had been meted out his proper allotment of hardships. And, as may be easily inferred, the problems of thirty-seven daughters, with thirty-three of them yet to be given in wedlock, were not among the least of his declining years. Thus it was that his thoughts had of late centred about Ezra Gimmil. Could this strange renegade be won back into the faith of his fathers, a faith which he had not publicly renounced, he could be induced to take from the Dale home at least ten daughters.

The Elder Gimmil had surrounded himself with twelve wives. That his son should find content with one in the face of the revelation of God and the laws of holy church was something which the Elder Dale, with all his deep learning, could not understand. Rightfully he laid it to the ramified evil which had taken root in the soul and body of Ezra Gimmil.

After his futile visit in the Gimmil home the Elder, inspired by a lifelong virtue as well as an economic necessity —for his wealth under the strain of thirty-seven daughters was not now what it had once been—called a meeting of the Apostles in the Temple. Before the men who assembled, all venerable, all wise, and all virtuous Mormons, the Elder Dale set forth the dangers which such a man as Ezra Gimmil introduced into the life of Provo. This was before the days when the tenets of faith began to weaken, when the youths of Provo, thirsting for adventure, began to slip quietly from the town, when the satraps of the government at Washington began to pry into the divinities of the great Creed.

But in laying before the assemblage in the Temple the facts and inferences and dangers, the Elder Dale urged above all things caution. He had carefully meditated upon the matter. To drive Ezra Gimmil from his home and from the soil which his fathers had tilled and built upon would be a simple business. But in driving him forth would he not drive forth also the potential husband of his ten daughters? Few young men there were in Provo as wealthy at their age as was Ezra Gimmil. His inheritance had been large. And he had had no brothers. Therefore, caution, caution, urged the Elder Dale. Prayers and meditation, faith and cajolery. Let them summon before them the woman Miama first and talk with her. Let them do all that could be done before taking violent measures to rid the town of its devil's adherent.

Thus it came about that during the month which followed this assemblage the name of Ezra Gimmil was to be heard continually in the prayer of the

righteous of Provo. Courtesy and kindness were shown to him everywhere. The Elders themselves bought heavily of his grain, which filled to bursting the three great barns behind his home. And yet these manœuvres fell insensibly upon the apostate. Since the day he had opened his heart to the torments of a consciousness of sin Ezra Gimmil had closely watched himself. There was in him the stubbornness which is to be noted in the characters of great sinners as well as in those of great saints, both of whom are identically the stuff of martyrdom.

At night he lay often awake, scowling into the darkness. He had no precepts of God or man to excuse his weakness. And yet there was something within him greater than all the human and divine dictates he had been taught by his fathers to reverence. It was the voice of his flesh crying out against the voices of godliness and virtue. And this voice alone he would follow, let it lead him into the seventh perdition. He was a man and able to march upon Hell like a man—if Miama would remain only at his side. Let the Devil claim them both. . . .

It was after the services in the Temple one March evening that the Elder Dale finally spoke the word of doom. He had waited long. He had done all that could be done. He had fought to the last moment. He leaped now into the pulpit, and raising his arm above the heads of the congregation, burst forth in a booming voice,

"Brethren of God, children of the Latter Day Saints, hearken! I am to speak to you of that which all of you know. There is in our midst one who has forsworn the God of his fathers, one who has turned upon the laws of the land into which he was born. His name is Ezra Gimmil, son of Rufus Gimmil. We of the Temple have spoken with him and prayed for him. But the light of God will not enter a soul overshadowed by the breath of evil. For five years has Ezra Gimmil continued to live in flagrant monogamy with a wanton named Miama. For five years has this woman, with her eyes and her kisses, her words and her body, lured this man to continue to live in sin with her alone, to deny to the sisters of his church the sanctity of his home. Inhospitable and abandoned, I denounce him as a menace to the morals of our Provo and a danger to the youth of our church. Such an example of depravity is bound if countenanced to have an effect upon the immature among us. All kindness has failed. There remains but one thing, brethren. . . ."

Through the gloomy streets of Provo, overshadowed by the guardian mountain which shut it off from the world, moved a silent procession. Fifty men there were in the procession, recruited from the most respectable and pious of the Temple's congregation. They moved through the dark streets without murmur. In their midst five of them carried a long rough timber.

Ezra Gimmil, raising his eyes from a book he was reading, stared out of the window into the darkness. He had caught the sound of the tread of many feet. Instinct, which is the companion of evil no less than of virtue, had shot a message into his brain.

He darted to the window and peered out.

Silence and the night—but beyond, the slowly moving shadows of many figures.

They were coming after him.

Without a murmur Ezra Gimmil sped swiftly to the second floor of his home. In her bed, weary with the duties of her home, lay his wife Miama. He shook her and awakened her.

"Our time is come," he whispered fiercely. "For our sins we are to be ridden out of Provo upon a rail at the hands of the Elders. Do you come with me?"

A terrified light shone from Miama's eyes. She rose and dressed. Noiselessly the two rushed down the stairs, slipped out of the back door and scurried in the darkness toward the mountain. Beyond the mountain ran the stage coach. Ezra Gimmil had filled

his pockets with coins. All else, his home, his animals and his land, he had left behind him.

And the fifty Elders of the Temple bearing the long, rough timber found the home empty and cried out in wrath, sending their curses after the sinners, who had fled.

III

In the city of Chicago, whither Ezra Gimmil and his wife Miama finally took their way, there was little to recall to their thought the harrowing experiences of their life in Provo. Here, Ezra Gimmil, with the same grimness which had characterized his defiance of his people, plunged himself into the activity about him. Within two months he had obtained a foremanship in a grain elevator on the river. He worked from seven in the morning until five in the afternoon and each day he returned to the home which his wife Miama kept for him, five little rooms in a huge building full of strange and heathen people.

But content did not come to him. Even as he had sat tormented one afternoon in the home of his fathers in Provo, did he sit now night after night, nursing the true torments of one who has been separated from land and people and God.

And each night Miama, sensing more and more the griefs which were consuming their happiness and sharing them, spoke hopefully to her husband.

"It is not too late, Ezra. Here, even in the land of the heathen, we may retrieve the favour of God. You can repent. See, I wish it, my husband. Come, let us look about us and find for our home at least two other wives. And I will write to the Elders of Provo what you have done and they will forgive."

But Ezra Gimmil, looking into the eyes of the woman for whom he had lost his earthly wealth and his divine soul, only shook his head.

"I cannot," he said. "There is something within me which forbids. I was born dedicated to the devil. I cannot fly against my destiny. In sin we have lived. In sin we must die. There is no retracing our ways. . . ."

And because he was at heart a pious, and reverent man, there was for Ezra Gimmil no consolation in the fact that the heathen among whom he worked and lived deemed him a worthy and righteous man. Nay, there was sin in his soul and he knew it. And so he lived and died—and went to hell.

IN SILENCE

By Charles Wharton Stork

A WHILE we spoke of this and that,
Of love among the rest,
With here a hint of selfish pride
And there an empty jest.

Then suddenly we faltered,
I could not speak your name.
We felt the wind of wings that beat
In silence when love came.

THE MIRACLE

By Charles Hanson Towne

WE were talking of coincidences; of how strange it is that this and that person meet in a crowded city, on a steamer, in a distant land—anywhere. But how seldom we consider how miraculous it is when two people, apparently everything to each other, and only a stone's throw apart, fail to realize their propinquity.

And then Christopher told us this little tale.

* * * * *

Constance and Philip Marsden know the Bertie Dunlaps well. Lily Dunlap is one of the loveliest women in a world filled with lovely women. Her hair, a golden riot on her head, is the despair and envy of her women friends; and her eyes, deep violet pools in the hush of starlight, are at once heaven and hell. In them are stored the dreams of the ages; and here indeed is a replica of that "face that launched a thousand ships."

How Bertie succeeded in marrying her is one of the mysteries; for he was the last man in the world to appeal to a woman like Lily—so we all said. The Marsdens could never solve the thing; nor could anyone else, for that matter. For Bertie, despite his virility, his manliness, was the most prosaic of men, utterly lacking in imagination—a commonplace enough type of young American engineer, good looking in a certain crude way, a man to mix a perfect cocktail and appear fine in his evening clothes, but beyond that—well, you know the kind. You see him every day on the Avenue, as if he had been made in a mould.

Yet six years before he had wooed and won this beautiful woman, and they seemed to live in the shadow of serenity, if not in the blazing sun of love-madness. Two children came to them, and Lily, for all her vivid beauty, seemed to "settle down," after a fashion. She was content to be with Bertie and the children—if anyone had called them "the kiddies" she would have slapped his face, for she was anything but a bromide. She never complained, either. She was not that type.

Constance kept up the friendship, for she and Lily had gone to school together, and that seems to make a bond between two women second only to the college ties of men. But Constance often told Phil that she could see that Lily was more in love with her husband than he was with her, and she couldn't help wondering.

"Why, she adores him! Yet he's late for dinner again and again; and she's the one who does the ringing up. I've heard her go to the telephone twice in the same afternoon when I've been at her home. Isn't it strange?"

But Philip, because he was a man—and a good deal like Bertie—simply yawned, admitted that it was, gave a last puff on his cigar, and went lazily upstairs to bed.

One or two old flames kept on coming to Lily's house—the fox-trotting kind of cavalier who likes to be seen with a beautiful woman, particularly when it breaks into their afternoons and interferes with their "business." But Lily was unkind to them, just as she was unkind to hostesses, who, when they asked her to their homes for tea, were put off with her famous *mot:*

"No, I never go to tea, because one

always meets at tea the kind of people who go to tea."

When Constance heard this remark, she knew that Lily could not be suffering. When one retains a sense of humour, after a stupid marriage, one is not to be pitied. Yet, after all, was it a stupid marriage?

Then the war came, and, in the first days of the draft, much to everyone's surprise, Bertie Dunlay enlisted at once. And not in any swivel-chair regiment. Not he! He went down to a camp near New York, and the talk was that he would soon get a commission.

"Who would have thought he had it in him?" people said. "To go right in with the riffraff, when he might have had a comfortable berth in Washington!"

And Lily became a romantic semi-widow.

The Marsdens rang her up more than ever, and got her for dinner whenever they could. They called it "doing their bit." But Lily wasn't always available. She seemed bowed down beneath her sudden burden of loneliness; and more and more she withdrew from her friends and acquaintances. Her lovely face took on an aspect of grief

It was four months after Bertie went away that Constance and Philip, late one afternoon, met Lily on the crowded Avenue, looking forlorn and tragically sad.

"Come with us," Constance said. "You are eating your heart out with loneliness. We are going to dine at the Ritz to-night and go to a play—we can get another seat for you next us—and we'll have a ripping time."

And Lily—she never knew why, save that she was bored to tears—accepted their glowing invitation.

"Bertie is seldom able to get to town on leave—he's so busy. I've seen him only twice since he went away. He says he's about worked to death," she told her friends, as they moved up the street together.

Later, under the soft light of the lamp on the hotel table, she spoke of her loneliness. Oh, but she was terribly in love! Her reserve melted, and in little gasps she spoke of sleepless nights and sad and seemingly endless days in the little house just off Gramercy Park. There were tears in her eyes and voice, and her lips trembled as the words came haltingly through them.

"You need your friends at such a time," Constance told her. "We must do matinées together, and go to concerts. I had no idea they worked the men so hard at the camps—did you, Phil?"

They took a taxi. It was a light, sparkling comedy they were going to see—the talk of the town, in one of the fashionable theatres just off Broadway in the Forties; just the kind of play for tired nerves, Constance said as they rushed through the crowded streets.

At the very door of the playhouse, Lily grasped her friend's hand.

"I can't go in," she said. "Forgive me—but I can't go in. The children will need me to-night. Little Bertie isn't strong, you know. I couldn't stay away from him the whole evening. I really couldn't. I don't know why I said I would come. It's selfish. . . . No, I can't go in!"

No protestations could drag her from the cab. She was not hysterical; she showed, on the contrary, more poise than she had revealed for months. But she was firmer than Constance and Philip had ever seen her before. She asked their forgiveness—but she had to go on home. Wouldn't they be kind, and understand? Wouldn't they be doubly gracious now, after all their graciousness, which she deserved so little, and send her on her way? She would see them soon—she would give a little dinner in their honour; she would send flowers to Constance on the morrow; she would. . . .

And she had her way. A line of taxis came up behind them. The Marsdens could not persuade her; and they loved her for her motherly solicitude, though secretly they deplored her futile going home. The children would be in bed,

and Lily's presence at their side would be utterly useless.

The door of the taxi slammed, and Lily waved good-bye to her friends from the window, a smile upon her lips. She had never looked lovelier.

And Constance and Philip went into the theatre. Just as the footlights went up a tall soldier came down the aisle with a woman, and sat almost directly in front of them.

Of course it was Bertie, with two silver bars on his shoulder. And his companion—it was obvious what, if not who, she was.

Yes, it was Bertie indeed. And though the play was a comedy, it might as well have been a tragedy, so far as the two friends of Lily were concerned. They never remembered what it was about. In fact, they went home before the second act.

There was a pause.

"That is not all," Christopher said. "I wish it were."

"And the miracle?" someone asked.

"The miracle is that Lily, with all her feminine sensitiveness, did not feel the approach of Bertie, as she sat in the taxi before the theatre. Perhaps you may think she did—that she saw him coming up the street with his companion—and that is why she went on home. But she did not."

"How do you know?" I could not help asking.

"Because the next morning," said Christopher, growing very grave, "the papers told how a taxicab, at the corner of Fifty-second Street and Broadway, had run into a heavy touring-car and been demolished. The driver was only slightly hurt; but the man and woman inside had been killed. The man had got in at Fiftieth Street, the chauffeur told the police. He had seemed to be waiting there."

* * * * *

We do not have to ask if the woman was Lily. What miracles happen in a great city!

APPRECIATION

By Patience Trask

SHE was at the symphony concert.

The music was of Tschaikowsky.

Never before had she heard such exquisite tones.

A musician of great renown watched her as she listened to the music.

It was at the last note of the Pastorale from "Manfred" that she clutched her bosom, gazed around the audience with frantic eyes, shrieked shrilly and fell face downward into the aisle.

"A true artist!" breathed the musician as he bent over her.

"My God!" she said as she opened her eyes. "I forgot to turn the fire out under the beans before I left home."

MY WIFE IS CONTENTED

By George Jameson

MY wife is contented. She takes not the slightest interest in the fashions for the coming season, and no longer complains that her shoes hurt her. I am smoking my favourite and oldest pipe in her bedroom, confident that she will not object to the odour.

My wife is contented. Since I have come home she has not asked me for money, nor has she insinuated that she was mentally deranged when she married me. For more than an hour I have not heard a word about my irregular habits, nor a murmur against my undesirable associates.

My wife is contented. She does not want to tell me scandal about the neighbours, nor has she attempted to make me sign the pledge. I have not been told I am an unfeeling brute, nor has she wept because I did not kiss her when I entered the house, as I used to do when we were first married.

My wife is contented. As I telephone to the undertaker I try to realize this fact. My wife is conten— It scarcely seems possible!

ABOVE PAR

By T. F. Mitchell

THERE is something—what shall I say, colossal?—about Clarice; something which makes her stand apart, something mighty, Cyclopean, a breath of the Infinite.

She is different from other girls I know. Whenever I am near her, I have a feeling of something stupendous, a peculiar sense of magnificence and grandeur which it is impossible to describe.

She is unique.

There is something—what shall I say, colossal?—about her.

She wears a No. 12 shoe.

INCONSISTENCY—When a woman displays a trim ankle and then asks your opinion of her new hat.

BRAMPTON FORD'S LAST BATTLE

By George Jay Smith

BRAMPTON FORD was a battle-scarred veteran of the duel of sex. He might be said to have belonged to the Black Horse Cavalry of soft adventure. Many had been his engagements (in the military, not the marital, sense of the word). His tactics varied. Some women — proud, hard-eyed blondes, for the most part—he had flabbergasted by gallant assault; some —the soft, little, timid sort—had yielded to strategy or mere diplomatic negotiation. Many occupied positions that required special study. Others were themselves masters in the game of war. A few, like Achilles, were all but invulnerable.

Brampton Ford had prided himself on the variety of his conquests. He had shrunk from no adventure, however unpromising, ignored no gauge of battle, however hazardous. Woman, as the mere creature in the generic sense, was an old story to Brampton Ford; but let that knight errant in his wanderings encounter a *woman*, the interesting individual, and straightway his nostrils scented the coming struggle, he was fired with the mania of battle, and nothing would do but he must try his arts.

As fortune had it, Mr. Ford was amply supplied with the sinews of war. For as in the contests of nations mere brains, training, well-drilled soldiery and eternal justice avail not if the cash be lacking wherewith to feed and move the armies; so in the eternal war of the sexes, while beauty, wit, cleverness, and magnetism serve, as it were, for armour and weapons, yet a supply of filthy lucre, the trash of the purse, is ever needful. Many a tender dove of a woman who will not demand good looks, nor be at home with wit and cleverness, and is by training made proof against electric affinity, will yield flutteringly to the magic of well-creased trousers or the glamour of the latest thing in hats and gloves. The haberdasher is the Vulcan of anti-feminine war. Brampton Ford had been able to devote himself almost exclusively to the great cause, for he had commanded the utmost resources of this maker of amatory armour and weapons.

But now, alas! Mr. Ford was fifty-eight!

Think what that means. Take his case well into consideration.

He was rich, a bachelor, ripe in experience, adept in command of the whole arsenal of love-making, acquainted with the theory and the practice of the art in all its branches, possessed of scarcely another interest in life—but he was fifty-eight! And not very well preserved at that! In fact, the sour tragedy and vinegar of life had long since begun to tell. Mr. Ford was nervous and pale. No careful plastering of his thin greyish hair could conceal his baldness. There were pouches under his eyes; there were lines that drooped from the corners of his mouth. He was irritable, tired, full of whimsies and fancies. Worse than that, he had lately begun to see things.

It was at twilight on a February day that certain of Mr. Ford's chairs were first observed by him to be behaving peculiarly. In the library and the living-room of his house in New York were

very curious old-fashioned pieces of furniture, descended to him, like his money and his fondness for female beauty, from his estimable grandfather. Some of the chairs were of rosewood, some of mahogany, and some (and those of the most fully upholstered) of baser woods. Mr. Ford regarded these chairs as old friends.

He had come in, fatigued from an afternoon in the club window, spent in watching and appraising the ceaseless procession of beplumaged femininity along the Avenue. How many women there were! Young and lovely ones, too! Mr. Ford, who once would have exulted in the fact, acknowledged it now with a sort of despair. It was all too much for him, the situation was getting beyond him, the numbers of the gay and flaunting enemy overwhelmed him. He had done his best, but to what good, after all? The opposing hosts were mightier and more insolent than ever, they flung to the breeze ever more and more challengingly the banners of finery, and he must soon be resigning, withdrawing the struggle, making way for younger and better men!

He was in a gloomy humour as he sank wearily into his library chair. He sat there alone, in the twilight, silent, with abstracted gaze.

"I must catch up on my sleep," he muttered. "Can't do these late hour affairs as I used. Feeling deucedly seedy."

He relapsed into moodiness, and sat staring at a high-backed mahogany chair which was only in part illuminated by the firelight. Suddenly, while he looked with the dilated attention of surprise, he beheld the chair bow to him, execute a curtsey and begin to move with arms outstretched and waving! He peered more closely. Why, it was a woman, and something familiar in her face—

"Agnes Langley, I'll be sworn!" he whispered.

Stately and tall, Agnes Langley lived and moved before him, fair of face and winning of manner as when she had loved him, many years ago. There flooded through him the memory of how basely he had treated her. He felt a tightness about the heart, and his hands clenched. He was about to rise and speak to her entreatingly when he became aware that two chairs to his left were going through curiously artificial motions, in unison. He turned to see what they were doing, and perceived with a start that they were two ballet girls—who were they?—he blinked, trying to make them out—Marie and Lottie?—yes, Lottie and Marie, girls of his at one time, not so many years past. Each with one arm raised, they danced on their toes, moving sideways a few paces, then, with the other arms raised, coming back and whirling on tiptoe till their short skirts fluttered and their taper bodies rotated like tops; all this they did as if to the rhythm of some unheard music.

By this time all the chairs about Brampton Ford had ceased to be chairs and were in the form of women, women he had known. He stared at them with hanging jaw, turning his haggard eyes in the uncertain light from one to another.

There in dim gold plush stood pretty Mrs. Hinterson—"Pinkie" he had called her. She seemed to smile at him mockingly. Beyond, in red, was the dark and tragic beauty of Diane Desmoulins, who had followed him from Paris—he hated to think of that narrow escape now. She leered at him. He forced his gaze away from her. And then, just beyond the fire, he discerned Louisa Hood walking away from him, but with her lovely face, unsmiling, turned toward him, just as she had looked after he had said that last brutal good-bye. And yes, there, far off in the dim corner, his eyes met those of Nellie Tryon—she was his first, years and years ago—he had really loved her . . . but now, as when he told her they were to part, he saw that her sweet blue eyes were filled with tears. The hopeless sadness of her look cut him to the heart. He tried to turn away.

"Oh, don't look so at me," he groaned. Then with an oath he leaped to his feet. "What's come over me?" He tottered to the bell and summoned Rimpole, his butler.

"Yes, sir?" inquired Rimpole.

"Eh—what—did I ring?" He leaned heavily on the table.

"Yes, sir," said Rimpole. "Any orders, sir?"

"Eh—yes. Take that chair out of this room! No, that one in the corner. Take it out—put it in the drawing-room—anywhere!"

"Yes, sir. I will, sir.

"No, do it now. Do it at once!"

And Brampton Ford watched his man carry out Nellie Tryon. Left alone, he looked about the room, still trembling. But the other chairs were just chairs again. He must have been dreaming. Still, he would go out to supper and see a play. He could not spend the evening alone—impossible!

From that time forth, the chairs in Mr. Ford's library were again and again bewitched. A few evenings later he had come home at nine. He was scarcely settled comfortably when the chairs began the same antics, in which he saw nothing grotesque, but something bitter and dreadful. Once more the women of yesteryear danced or smiled or wept about him. Some behaved immodestly, advancing toward him while he shrank back unresponsive, white and terrified. Others grovelled in the abandonment of grief, stirring him with horrible remorse.

When this wretched nightmare visited him, always some one woman became more poignantly vivid, more pitiful, more torturing to him than any of the rest, till Brampton Ford, strung to the breaking point, would with difficulty find speech and burst the spell that held him, get to his feet, ring for his servant, gulp some brandy, and order the astonished but obedient Rimpole to remove from the room the most offending chair. This happened several times, until one by one nearly all the chairs had been banished. Still he dared not be alone with those which remained. What a pass he was come to! Must he have no chairs at all? Was he losing his mind?

"It's something in that room," he muttered one afternoon as he came heavily homeward. "I'll sit in another room hereafter. They can't drive me out of my whole house."

So this day, breaking a habit of thirty years, he went to a room on the second floor. The day was bitter cold, and he basked in the glow of the fire. Then for a while he tried to read; but something on the page reminded him of years long past. His hands fell upon his knees, and he found himself gazing into the face of "Pinkie" Hinterson again! Rimpole—curse his stupidity!—had placed that chair of dim gold plush in this room, and it would infect all the other chairs with the ghastly enchantment that had grown so hateful to him. The soulless, pretty, smiling face of "Pinkie" wore a mocking and triumphant expression. She raised one arm as if in command, and straightway the trembling and obsessed old man—for he was old, very old, at fifty-eight—saw all the other chairs in the room melt into human forms. They became women he had known. Some he scarcely remembered, but as he peered, fascinated, he recognized a look in each one, even in those in the dimmest corners.

He was unable to move.

One after another the women were catching his attention, when Mr. Ford found himself wondering who it was that held him. For he was strongly clasped in the arms of a woman whose face he could not see. Her hands were coarse and strong. Her breath smelt of liquor. He tried in vain to twist around so as to see her face. He struggled and tugged to be free. Then he shrieked,

"Let me go! Let me go! You wench! You monster! A curse on the whole tribe of women! Fire and damnation! Let me go! Let me—"

The door opened and Rimpole entered.

"Did you call, sir?"

White and perspiring, his master stood shaking, leaning against the mantel.

"No—yes. Brandy." He spoke so huskily that Rimpole scarcely heard. He swallowed a quantity of the spirit.

"Rimpole," he said at last, "I'm going away for a while—going south. Get my things ready at once, do you hear? Let's see, this is the—"

"The third of March, sir."

"I'll go to-morrow. I shan't sleep at home to-night, Rimpole."

Mr. Ford's eyes at this moment happened to fall upon the chair that had been "Pinkie" Hinterson. Immediately he saw her face forming as if out of a mist. She was grinning at him in derision. In another instant all of her would be there, and the other chairs would again begin playing their parts in their hideous game. Speaking rapidly and in a voice that rose to an insane shriek, Mr. Ford cried,

"Take her away! She did it all, curse her! She egged the others on! You damnable wench! You she-devil! Oh, take her away!—take her *away!*"

He was kicking and striking at the chair in a blind fury. Rimpole hurriedly dragged it from the room. When he returned, Mr. Ford had fallen to the floor and was mumbling over and over,

"Curse them all! Damn them all!"

Rimpole lifted him, saying,

"Come, sir, you're not well. Shall I send for the doctor, sir? You've —you've been overworking, sir."

Overworking! Even at the moment Brampton Ford saw the joke of that.

"No," he said, feebly but authoritatively. "I want no doctor. I'm all sound enough. But I need a change. I'll go south to-morrow."

Mr. Ford went south. It was a happy thought, for he escaped his tormentors. Once free from their presence, he recovered something of his former poise. Gradually a little colour came into his faded cheeks. He trimmed his white moustache, that had grown ragged. He carefully brushed the lock that caressed his crown. Yes, he was quite himself again; for he had begun to look with much interest upon a certain lovely girl of twenty, whose table was next his in the great dining-room of the hotel. He managed to be presented to her, he transferred himself to her table, he besieged her with delicate attentions.

But Adelaide Morton was impervious to the elderly gentleman's advances. He hung round her for two months, he beleaguered her, he laid mines, he cut off all avenues of relief, he bombarded her with flowers and candies, he brought to bear all his arsenal of blandishments. In vain. She smiled at his most skilful endeavours. It seemed that the slowly acquired art, the valued training of forty years, went for nothing!

One day, at an unfrequented spot by the dunes of the long beach, Mr. Ford went a bit too far. With a cold smile, which came perilously near being a sneer, the girl remarked,

"Don't you think you are rather too *old*, Mr. Ford, to play the fool this way? Thank you, I prefer to walk back alone."

In those words, "too old," there was a bitter sting. An old fool? Was he really done for? He stared out over the blue water. Bah! There were other women. He would look round a bit. But the fact was, this Adelaide Morton had got into his blood—what there was left of it. He couldn't keep his eyes off her. He tried to regain his former footing with her, but she persistently refused to recognize him again. He felt more humiliated than angry. But at length he became discouraged. He telegraphed one day to Rimpole:

"Have ready house at Morley. Coming there Friday."

At Morley was Mr. Ford's country home. Rimpole at once went down there. Now this house had never been sufficiently furnished, in Rimpole's opinion. This May was unusually chilly, and he found the Morley rooms decidedly bare and uncomfortable. Coming to the place from the luxurious

warmth of the city house, Rimpole felt it cold, barnlike, in a word impossible. A happy thought occurred to Rimpole. There were all those handsome chairs Mr. Ford had found unnecessary at home. Why not ship them to Morley? With the trusted and responsible Rimpole, to decide was to do. He sent a wagon load of the superfluous furniture down to the country house.

On a cool evening in May he had his master met at Morley station.

Mr. Ford was irritable and fatigued after his long journey. In moody silence he entered his lonely house, without a glance at the sprouting garden-beds or the well-kept lawns and shrubberies.

"Some whiskey, Rimpole," he ordered as he sank dejectedly into an armchair in the large dining-room with the seaward windows. The evening was so chilly that Rimpole had had a fire made on the open hearth.

"Here, sir," said the foreseeing Rimpole. "Dinner will be served in half an hour, sir." Mr. Ford said nothing, and Rimpole retired.

Mr. Ford stared at the fire. He wished he was back in the warmer climate. He wished that that Morton girl—suddenly a something moving at the left caught his attention. He turned with a swift premonitory trembling. Then he groaned. He recognized many of the too familiar chairs from his library in the city house. He was at once angry, mystified and frightened. As he gazed, unable to stir, seized with the old obsession, he watched these horrible chairs develop women's faces and pass into human proportions. The cold sweat came out upon him. He stared in an agony of expectancy, to see again the faces of Diane Desmoulins, of Agnes Langley, of the chorus girls, of Pinkie Hinterson, of Louisa Hood, and all the rest.

But at first he recognized none of these. This was strange. Yet whose faces were they? He knew them. But there was a terrible change. He no longer saw these once admired women as they had been, but as they were *now!* Gradually this fearful difference dawned upon him. Agnes Langley was old and wrinkled—there she was—he recognized her in spite of the shocking change, and he shuddered. Then he saw the French woman near by, with a ghastly, toothless leer, drunken, bepainted, degraded. She shook her fists at him angrily, and he cowered helpless.

Yes, he began to recognize them all now, in spite of the ravages of time. Pasty-faced, ugly, sour, were some of them; dignified, disapproving, white-haired, were others; and yet others, a few, seemed to keep something of youth and beauty. They began to move. They circled about him, threatening, glaring wildly at him, advancing, retreating. More and more violently they moved. Some struck him in the face, some pulled at him and pinched him.

On entering he had noticed a delicate gold chair by the door. It was now Adelaide Morton! Oh, she was brilliant with the pride of unconquered youth! She leaped upon a table, and there, raised above the rest of the rout, she directed the attack. She laughed derisively, the others followed in a cackle of jeers and curses. She signalled for an onset, and all together they rushed toward him. All but three or four, who stood aside, unmoving, silent. He observed these now for the first time. Who were they? Why were they so different from the rest? How pale they were! Ah!—a thrill of dread shot through him—these were the ghosts of girls now dead! Among them he saw in the shadow at one side Nellie Tryon, who had loved him the first. She looked at him fixedly and, as it seemed, with pity. But he knew her for dead, and an icy chill crept into his blood. He stared at her, frozen with dark misgiving and horror.

The rest came wrathfully toward him. He bestirred himself and tried to rise to escape them. He struggled and panted. The same coarse, strong hands of an unknown woman held him as before, only the hands were wrinkled now. He tugged and cursed and

twisted. Around him the other women rushed in a furious revel. They trampled him, struck him, spat upon him. With a gasp of supreme effort he tore himself free from the hag who held him, and fled—fled round and round the room. Then with shrieks and curses he began to fight and belabour his persecutors with blows, with kicks, with strangle holds. He screamed with the wild excitement of the struggle and with the cold fear that compressed and tortured his heart. He began gasping for breath.

He thought he heard Nellie Tryon call his name. He turned to her dead face. She was nodding slowly and sadly, and she raised her hand as if to summon him. He could not look away from her. Paralyzed with horror, he sank amid the wreckage of the chairs.

Rimpole burst into the room.

"For God's sake, sir, what is the matter?" he blurted out.

His master was lying in a heap on the floor. Brampton Ford had fought and lost his last battle.

BLOW, YE BLITHE AIRS

By Clinton Scollard

BLOW, ye blithe airs, from out the depths of morning;
Azure and living gold the whole world wears;
My love's awake, her comeliness adorning;
Blow, ye blithe airs!

Blow, ye blithe airs, across the paths of noonday;
The joy of life each vale and height declares;
My love's abroad, and glories in the June day;
Blow, ye blithe airs!

Blow, ye blithe airs, the twilight meadows roaming;
The roses droop, the firefly's lanthorn flares;
My love awaits me somewhere in the gloaming;
Blow, ye blithe airs!

Blow, ye blithe airs, the midnight stars are gleaming
Down all the far celestial thoroughfares!
My love—but soft, lest ye disturb her dreaming,
Blow, ye blithe airs!

SPICE, to some women, is the only variety of life.

EVA DUVEEN

By Thyra Samter Winslow

I

SHE must get something to-day.

It was the first thing she thought of as she waked up. It was the first thing she had thought of as she waked up every day for the past month. Now it was the middle of September. She must get something to-day.

Eva Duveen raised up on one thin elbow and looked at the nickelled alarm clock on her table. It was ten minutes to nine. She got out of bed and went to the window. The window was hung with a soiled white net curtain. She pulled the curtain aside and looked out. In the factory just across the street the machines were already busy. The four girls she always saw when she looked out were bending over their work, sewing, sewing, sewing. She couldn't stand that! Better be dead than spending the days like that, bent over a sewing machine in a factory. Not that she was so much better off herself. Still—

She shut the window. It was unbearably hot, but at least she could keep out some of the noise.

She took her cheap mirror from the table. The handle had been cut off so that it would fit better into her make-up box. She walked over to the window again and examined her face.

There was no use trying to keep it away from herself. There were wrinkles. Last year those around her eyes had begun to show. Those on her forehead had been there for years, but didn't count because she could cover them with her hair. But, around her mouth—those hadn't been there last year. Not so deep, anyhow. There were two, quite deep, from the corners of her mouth to her nose.

Worse than that, when she bent her head, her cheeks formed a whole row of wrinkles, made a caricature of herself. Her skin was pale and coarse and criss-crossed by fine lines, caused by hundreds of hurried applications and removals of cheap creams and grease paints. No wonder she hadn't found anything.

She put her mirror down with a little bang. Had she cracked it? She picked it up gingerly. It was not cracked. She shivered at the possibility.

She took off her faded pink cotton crêpe nightgown and, filling the basin in the corner, she washed as well as she could, letting the water drip on to the faded red carpet. She dried herself with the cleanest of the three towels—her landlady gave her only three a week, and she had to keep one of the three for cold cream. Sitting on the bed, she put on the same stockings she had worn the day before, the only whole pair she owned, the top and feet parts of cheap cotton, the rest of sleazy silk. She put a little cold cream on a dirty handkerchief and rubbed it on her high-heeled, patent leather pumps, until they looked almost as if they had been shined. She knew the dust would stick to them more than ever, but she could rub them off on her stockings before going in to see anyone.

She paused, then, for a moment and sprinkled talcum powder on her arms and neck. How thin her throat was getting! The bones seemed to protrude more than ever. She fanned herself with the last night's *Evening Jour-*

nal. It was hot. She hated this room with its one rear window and its factory view, the cheap dressing table, the rickety square table, piled with a miscellany of paper and clothes. Was this a place to live in? If she could get something, she could move Not that the other places would be better. They'd be a change, anyhow.

She put on her cheap, lace-trimmed lingerie and adjusted the faded ribbons. Her corsets seemed even looser than usual. She mustn't get any thinner.

She cold-creamed her face, removing the cream with the used towel, powdered liberally and added generous quantities of rouge, of blue and black eyebrow pencils and of lip-stick. Eva knew that her make-up would stand out in the strong sunlight. She knew that even in a day of much rouging she would be conspicuous, but she knew how sunken her cheeks were, how thin her eyelashes. She did not dare omit anything. She arranged her thin, uneven blonde hair into the semblance of a stylish coiffure, holding it in place with numberless "invisible" hairpins of a bright bronze colour.

Listlessly, then, she straightened the things on the table—three professional photographs, one of The Elanos, signed "Fondly yours, Effie Elano," one of a girl draped in a wisp of chiffon, signed, "To my little pal, from Myrta Jackson," one of a man with a typical, lined, strained actor's face, its signature, "With best regards, Harold W. Torrens"—and cheap toilet things of light blue celluloid and a half-empty bottle of lilac toilet water.

This wouldn't do. She put on her blouse of flesh-coloured Georgette crêpe, fairly fresh except just at the collar, and her tan suit, putting the collar of the blouse on the outside of the coat and leaving the coat open. She had bought the suit two months before, when she first got to New York, at a little shop on Broadway that had three prices. At least they had quoted three to Eva on the suit, but she often wondered if they wouldn't have come down to a fourth price if she had hesitated. She had paid $21.50, but she liked the suit and felt that it had a smart cut to it. She adjusted her hat, small, tight-fitting and black, with an exaggerated black quill curled out at the side. She felt that she looked rather well.

She went out, then, down the three flights of narrow linoleum-covered stairs. The boarding house was in West Eighth Street. Eva took the Sixth Avenue "L" and got off at the Forty-second Street Station. She went into the Automat across from Bryant Park, changed a quarter into nickels and got a five-cent sandwich and a cup of coffee. The other fifteen cents would be enough for lunch and she'd use another quarter for supper and car fare home. There was little enough money left.

She drank her coffee slowly, then dipped her napkin into a glass of water and rubbed her mouth and her fingers. She opened her purse and retouched her lips with her lip-stick and adjusted her hat a bit more fetchingly to one side, repowdered her nose. She was ready!

II

Her first stop was at a booking agent's in Forty-second Street, a walk of only about a block. She knew it was almost hopeless. She had been there so many times already. The dirty-looking, bare office, the walls hung with theatrical "paper" and a few professional pictures, was divided by a railing, on one side of which sat an office boy, and on the other the row of chairs against the wall was half-filled with the usual types of out-of-work theatrical people. There was a middle-aged, rather fat woman, two young, cheaply dressed girls, a large, black-haired man chewing on a toothpick, a young fellow with yellowed teeth. Eva did not know any of them.

"May I see Mr. Stuart?" she asked the boy.

He looked at her carelessly.

"Got appointment!"

"No; but I saw him about a week ago and he told me to come back."

"What's the name?"

"Eva Duveen. It—it was about a small part or a place in the chorus. He thought maybe a stock company—"

The boy slouched out of his chair. He'd do his part, anyhow. He disappeared inside a door marked "private," reappeared in half a minute.

"He said there was nothing. Come back in a week or two."

Eva went out. There was no use waiting and insisting on seeing Stuart. She had spent several long days of waiting before. It never occurred to Eva that the agents made their living by getting positions for people. To her the agents were gods, granting favours to a gifted few. In other years, somehow, by the middle of September—

She was out on Broadway again. The sun was hotter. The streets, the broad walks, the pavements, were all alike, grey. Broadway, with its signs, its unlit lights, its cheap shops, looked like a side show of a circus on a day when there is no performance. There was no attempt to keep up the hoop-la, the dazzle that existed at night. Everything was tawdry, a fake exposed. It was as if a juggler had taken off his glittering coat of red and gold and was spending the time in his shirt sleeves, waiting. Eva breathed deeply of the hot, dusty air. She would have liked to have taken her coat off, but she knew she looked more stylish with it on. All winter on the road she looked forward to this—getting back to town, to Broadway. Well, here she was. And jobless.

She went next to an office in Thirty-ninth Street. The same crowd was here, as if they had been magically transferred, save that the large man had a fierce moustache and chewed gum instead of a toothpick. There was a girl in charge instead of a boy. The conversation was almost exactly the same.

Walking up Broadway again, Eva admitted she hadn't expected anything else at these places. These weren't her best chances, of course. Only she had thought maybe she could get a part. She'd go over to the Crescent Theatre now.

She met a girl who had been in a company with her. She had never liked the girl, yet now they greeted each other with a half-hysterical show of friendship, talked of nothing for a minute or two and parted as quickly as they could. How old and worn Trixie was looking. Eva felt she couldn't be looking as badly as that.

The Crescent Theatre was in Forty-fifth Street. It was a small theatre that always housed a successful musical comedy, and the managers always had several shows on the road. Twice Eva had been out with their shows. She wouldn't admit that now they would have nothing for her. Of course, it is best to be sent by a booking-office. Still, if there was an opening, an old girl of theirs, as she was—

She walked down Forty-fifth Street, into the theatre, up to the manager's office on the second floor. A boy, sweeping, did not interrupt her. In the outer office a stenographer was writing, a boy of about fourteen was clipping theatrical papers.

Eva spoke to the girl.

"I'd like to see Mr. Levis, please." She had been there three times before, but had never seen him.

"Name, please."

"Eva Duveen. I was with 'The Golden Butterfly' company on the road, two years ago."

She knew Levis didn't remember her name.

"Sit down. I'll see if he can see you."

Eva sat down on the edge of a chair, looked at the filing cabinets, the business-like desk, the framed pictures of stars. If only she had real business here—if she had come in to sign a contract!

"Mr. Levis said come right in."

The girl surprised her. Eva hurried to her feet, pushed a wisp of hair under her hat and went into the private office.

"Yes?" said the man seated at the desk inside.

He was a round, well-fed fellow, with black shining hair and a spotted vest. His face was severe but not unkind.

Eva Duveen stood awkwardly before him, her black patent-leather purse held tightly in her hand.

"I—I wondered if—if you had anything for me. I was with your 'Golden Butterfly' all season two years ago. I just got in—I mean I closed a few—few—weeks ago with 'The Flyaway Girl.' I'd like to get something right away if I could."

"Who sent you here?"

"No one. I just thought, because I was with your shows before. I'm a pretty good dancer. I did a feature dance in 'Old Mother Hubbard.' I've had pretty good parts. I nearly always have lines. I've never jumped a show."

She talked eagerly, quickly, hoping to convince Levis of her worthiness, trying to ignore the look in his eyes.

Levis had looked her over quickly, lost interest. Had he seen her wrinkles, her cheapness, in that one glance?

"I'm sorry, Miss—er—oh, yes, thank you, Duveen, but we're not putting out much this year. You know what a bad year last year was. This year will be worse. And the things we are putting on now, little intimate shows, using half a dozen girls, you know, débutante type, no dancing at all, just a little singing. I'm sorry. I'll keep you in mind—if anything turns up."

He spoke with real kindness in his voice. He hated things like this. He'd have to tell his stenographer to be more careful about whom she let in.

"Thank you," said Eva Duveen, embarrassed by his kindliness. "Thank you," she repeated, and went out.

Had he seen that she was just about finished or was it the truth, that he wasn't using many girls? She could dance pretty well, and, made up, her wrinkles didn't show—much—from the front. She couldn't tell him that. She was rather thin.

Another booking agent. Here she saw a man she knew, Bert Bryant, who had had a small comedy bit in a show with her once. He greeted her with aloof friendliness. He could tell she was out of work and didn't have much money, in spite of her tan suit and the new blouse. Bert was not one to make intimacies needlessly.

"How's the girl?" asked Bert. "What's the good word?"

"Just got back off the road," she said, and then remembered she had passed him on Sixth Avenue over a month before. It never occurred to her until later that he, too, was out of work and probably as bad off as she.

"Had a good year?"

"Nothing to complain of. It's good to be back in town, isn't it?" Eva smiled as brightly as she could.

"You bet. I just closed with the Alvon Four. We had six weeks' time right here in New York. I'm turning down all the small-time stuff on the road, though. This is going to be a bad year, and if I can't find something big, I'm going to float around town and work the cabarets. At least you know where you are. Ever think of it?"

"Oh, yes," Eva smiled again. How many times she had thought of it—but with no results. Her voice never had been good.

"You see," she said, "I'm looking for stock or chorus work where I can have a part or some good lines. I was just up to see Levis, and he was telling me about a road show he was going to put out soon—one of those little intimate things that just use a few girls. I was with a Levis show a couple of years ago. I thought, though, if there was something here. You can't be too sure, you know."

She passed him and went to the boy behind the railing.

"You'll have to wait your turn," he said.

There were eight or nine ahead. Eva sat down for a while and tried to be patient. What was the use of waiting?

She went out.

"So long, girl, best of luck," Bert

Bryant called to her as she passed him. She could feel the condescension in his voice.

She walked up Broadway again. She must find something, right away, now, to-day. She couldn't keep on like this.

III

EIGHT years of it—and here she was—out of work, useless, wrinkled. Oh, well, no use crying over it now.

She had never thought that she would be like this. Why, she was going to do great things. At least, once she had thought so. She remembered her first show. She had run away from Snowdon, Nebraska, to join it. Snowdon wasn't such a bad town, now that she thought of it. She had rather looked forward to playing Snowdon some day—or to go back there—famous—"Former Snowdon girl, now well-known Broadway star, returns to Snowdon for a visit."

How often she had imagined that headline in the Snowdon *Gazette*. And now—

Snowdon had been awfully slow. She remembered how bored she always was with the people there. She had been the prettiest girl in Snowdon then, though. Lots of people had told her. Why, there never was a drummer who came to Snowdon who didn't tell her she was too good for the town.

Only eight years ago! Was she only twenty-seven? Nobody would believe it. Then her hair had been blonde—real blonde—and fluffy, and her cheeks had been round and fat. She had been nineteen when she left Snowdon to join the Marshall Company. She remembered that yet. The chorus had seemed fun, that year, even the long jumps and the cold dressing-rooms. It had all seemed part of a big game that was going to lead to a big success. Even missing a meal just meant that one of the company would get out at a station and buy crackers and cheese and bananas, and they'd spread the things on the red velvet coach seats and have a picnic. And then she had come to New York. She had been pretty then. They didn't let her stand around in anterooms or turn her down. Well, that was a long time ago.

Eva remembered, suddenly, that she hadn't had much breakfast. It must be about time for lunch. She walked to a Childs' restaurant, a block away, and ordered a plate of beans and a glass of milk. How close it was—and noisy. She finished quickly and paid her check.

She'd see now what Frenyear had. She was glad there were a lot of booking agents. Eva had always been glad because she didn't need to go to Frenyear. Years ago she wouldn't have dreamed of going. Frenyear dealt in lower class attractions. She had hoped now for something a little better—still—

The Frenyear office, in Forty-seventh Street, was smaller and fewer people were here, mostly chorus girls. They were cheap types, the kind that go out on the smaller road shows, girls from the slums, small-town girls in home-made hats. Eva felt that her own suit and blouse had style, even if she wasn't so very young.

Eva was ashamed of being at Frenyear's. Still, she must get a job. If he had a good road show, now, not a first-class show, but something fairly good—she must get something to-day—

A young man, in his shirt sleeves, smoking a cigarette, was at a desk.

"I want to speak to Mr. Frenyear," she said.

In this office some of her old-time nonchalance came back. Here was the one place she felt superior.

"I'll tell him. You've had experience?"

Eva laughed.

"I've been with 'The Show of the Year' at the Cosmopolitan and a Levis show—four years of experience."

She tossed her head. Experience, indeed! She wouldn't say more than four years, though. More than that. . . .

The young man went to a door, opened it, called in something, turned his head.

"Come on in."

There were three men in the room, all in their shirt sleeves, all smoking. Two had their hats on, tilted a little.

"You wanted a position, I believe," said one of them, a sallow fellow of about forty.

"Yes, a part or—or in the chorus." Eva tried to be haughty, but the stares of the three kept down some of her hauteur.

"You were at the Cosmopolitan, you said?"

"Yes, I was there a whole season, in the chorus.

"Several years ago, perhaps." Eva heard the sneer under the words. She grew cold.

"Yes, about four years ago, I think it was. I was with 'The Traders,' the year after that, and then 'The Golden Butterfly.' I just closed with 'The Fly-away Girl.' I can dance well. Perhaps you've heard of me. I'm Eva Duveen."

He shook his head. Then,

"Well, I've got one thing—take it or leave it. Rehearsals started yesterday with Gus Muddle's show. They need another dancer. Want to go up there?" He took out a card and held a pencil over it.

"Gus Muddle? You don't mean 'The Dancing Dolls'? You don't—"

"The very same. What's the matter? Never tried burli-que?"

"Why, no, I've—I've always been with first-class shows, I—" Eva remembered the last two years—the shows hadn't been first-class. Still, this!

"It's one of the best shows on the wheel, nice people to work for. Shows are scarce this year. If you're a *good* dancer, you *may* do. Take it or leave it."

"May I—let you know in a little while?" Eva had tried hard to decline with a haughty toss of her head, but she couldn't.

"Can't promise it'll still be here." He called out of the door,

"Say, Sam."

The young man at the desk came in.

"If this young lady comes back, give her this card to Gus Muddle, will you?" Then, to Eva,

"I guess you'll be back all right," he smiled and sneered.

As she turned to go, he called,

"They're rehearsing a new show at the Cosmopolitan. If you don't like Gus Muddle's show, you might ask them to put you in 'The Show of the Year' again." The other two men laughed at this. Then,

"Goo-bye, the boy'll give you the card when you come back."

"When I come back," thought Eva as she hurried out still icy. So—this was what she got—her first chance this year—burlesque. Was she as badly off as that? Two shows a day, coarse surroundings, impossible people, insults—must she go—take it—if only . . .

"The Show of the Year!" She had been in that six years ago, her third year in the business. That had been a year! She remembered now the ecstasy of playing New York. Even then, though, she had grumbled at extra rehearsals, grumbled when other girls got bigger salaries. She remembered the little costumes, dainty, always clean and mended, the long, well-lighted dressing-room with its rows of tables, its saucy girls. That had been wonderful. And the next year she had preferred a little part on the road and the year after that there were so many new girls she couldn't get into a city show and had had to take a road show again. And now—Gus Muddle.

IV

THE Cosmopolitan was only a block away. She'd go in there, just for fun, and watch them rehearse. Although she knew it was out of all reason, way down, something told her that maybe there would be something—someone would remember her and make room—a year in New York . . .

Hardly knowing she did it, she crossed Broadway and hurried over to the Cosmopolitan and around to the stage door. She pushed open the heavy door as she had done so many

times. A man at the door glanced at her, let her pass, she was inside.

It was just as she remembered it, the huge "set" pushed back, the immense stage. Groups of people were standing about, talking. A big man, close to the footlights, was explaining something, gesticulating dramatically, to a group of five or six. No one was in practice clothes. Rehearsals were evidently just beginning.

Eva went a little closer to one of the groups. So these were the new chorus girls, the kind "The Show of the Year" was using now. She was surprised at their youth. They seemed so much younger than she remembered them—though she had only been twenty-one when she played with the Cosmopolitan show. How could they be so young and so beautiful? They had a kind of creamy, round beauty that horrified Eva as she looked at them. She had forgotten that girls could be—like that. Some of them were in cool, crisp summer dresses, others in suits. They had on Georgette crêpe blouses, too. Not like hers. Hers was soiled around the neck, flimsy. Theirs were fresh, floating, displaying rounded arms and soft, powdery necks. How wonderfully groomed they were, from their perky little hats to their sleek heels! They had on rouge and powder, but it seemed a part of their smooth young skins.

Suddenly, standing there, Eva felt older than she had ever felt before, as if she belonged to another age, another existence. She seemed definitely second-hand, second-class, immensely inferior. And yet, there had been a time when she, too, was cool and blonde and fresh and impudent-looking; when she, too, could pose and toss her head and talk with an imitative English accent. How well she knew all of the little tricks, the high laugh, the smart pose. How well she had been able to do all of them—one time.

She felt, almost, as if she were invisible, as if it would be a sort of shame if the girls saw her. She drew closer into the shadow of a piece of scenery.

Another girl came in. She was like the group she joined and yet about her there was something even more exquisite. She seemed a bit cooler, a bit more fragile, aloof. Her blonde beauty seemed more artificial, more china-like. She wore white, trimmed in tiny strappings of ribbon, the sort of frock a half-hour's walk on Broadway in the heat would crumple into grey. Her little white shoes had not touched much of the sidewalk. She held a gold mesh bag in one hand, the other touched the violets at her waist.

Eva moved away a little. She knew that she could never ask for a place in "The Show of the Year." If she could only get out without being seen, laughed at!

She hurried to the door. Someone in her path. She looked up.

"Why, hello, Jerry," she said.

"Well, if it ain't Eva Duveen," said the voice heartily.

The voice belonged to Jerry Bray, assistant property man at the Cosmopolitan. Each summer Eva met Jerry a couple of times at cheap table d'hote restaurants or on the street. They always stopped for a chat. The last few years she had even allowed him to take her places, "treat" her occasionally. Jerry was a sandy little fellow, with extraordinarily broad shoulders. He was past forty and yet he had the mannerisms of a young boy and everyone treated him as if he were very young. He was a sort of a joke around the Cosmopolitan. Everyone was always teasing everyone else about Jerry and blaming him for things and sending him on errands. Yet everyone was kind enough to him.

"What you doing here, Eva?" asked Jerry.

Eva didn't dare tell the truth, say why she had come in. She waited a minute, unconsciously taking the impudent pose of a "Show of the Year" girl.

"Oh, just happened to be in the neighbourhood and thought I'd drop in and look around."

"Where you playing?"

"Resting, just now. Guess I'll go out in a few weeks. I'm considering several things. Ever see anything of the old bunch?"

They talked a little while then, of friends who had been in the show six years ago, of other acquaintances. Some had risen, some were playing "small time," a few were dead, most of them had disappeared into the usual oblivion of People We Used to Know.

Then suddenly, Jerry,

"Married yet, Eva?"

"No, still happy, thank you."

Jerry stood on one foot, took a cigar out of his pocket and moistened the end of it. Then,

"Say, Eva, what about you and me tying up? Kind of sudden, but you've known me for a long time and I—I'd kind of like to have a home. You know—marriage—the real thing. Used to live with my mother—in Harlem—nice little flat, steam heat and everything. She died last year and one of the boys and I been batching it and, say, Eva, the road ain't none too good now and you don't look none too well. You know, I been liking you ever since that year you were on here. What do you say?"

Eva listened unbelievingly. Here she was, letting Jerry Bray ask her to marry him! Jerry Bray! Why, six years ago, Jerry Bray wouldn't have dared walk down the street with her—any more than he would have dared walk down the street with those girls over there on the stage now. But each time she saw Jerry he must have seen the change, seen that she was approaching the place where he dared . . . When she was here at the Cosmopolitan he had told her she was the prettiest girl he had ever seen and she had smiled graciously and laughed about it later. Since then many times she had been amused at his "attentions," the tickets to shows and occasional meals, the last years. Now—he had proposed to her! In spite of the many matrimonial chances that are supposed to come—romantically—to those who "tread the board," Eva knew that this was only her third real proposal—Gilbert first, then a travelling man for a hat firm, and now—Jerry. Oh, well.

Jerry had been going on with his monologue. Eva had heard part of it. She tried to listen.

"You know me, kid, I'm right there. I got a good job, good and steady, and the girls around here slip me a little something once in a while for doing little favours for them—you know how that is. The flat ain't so bad—got a fine set of furniture, a three-piece parlour set. Got it just before my mother died. You could fix it up swell. And say—"

Eva smiled. A Harlem flat and Jerry Bray! Wouldn't the girls she knew—used to know—laugh at that! Still, wasn't that better than—

She wanted time to think—anything—she couldn't accept and yet . . .

She changed the subject.

"Who's the girl that just came in, the little blonde in white. Her face looks familiar."

"In white? Oh, yes, that's Teddy Arnold. You never saw her, did you? Maybe her pictures. Last year was her first year. Some doll, eh? She's Harkheimer's girl. He still can pick 'em."

Someone called to Jerry. He started away with his funny, hurried walk with a limp in it.

"Wait a minute, Eva," he called, "I'll be right back. Think over what I said."

Over her purse, Eva pressed her hands together until they hurt her. Harkheimer's girl—the girl in white. And she—she started to laugh, very low—she had spent nights, nights, wondering whether she ought to—whether it would be right—whether—and, in the end, she had refused—she, Eva Duveen—worn out, ugly, wrinkled—had, six years ago, refused to be Harkheimer's girl.

She remembered all of it, the flowers he had sent, the talks in the wings, his fat, soft, red hands, the dinners together, the suppers after the show, when he had laughed, heavily, at everything she said. He had offered her so

many things—the things this girl had now—and she had refused.

Quite dully, Eva wondered why she had refused—how she could have refused. If she had accepted, she wouldn't be Harkheimer's girl any more, now, of course—but—would it have come to worse than this? Now, even on the street, she knew that no man would even turn around to look at her. Nobody wanted her now, at all. And yet, once, she . . .

Jerry was back.

"Well, don't take it so hard. Look as though you've seen a ghost."

"Maybe I have," said Eva, and tried to laugh.

"Too much heat," said Jerry.

"Wonder you ain't dead, walking around trying to get a job on a day like this. Middle of September and you'd think it was August first. And they're planning to open up here the middle of October. Hope it's cooler by then. Say, Eva, what about it? Want to tie up with me? Do I need a recommend?"

Eva knew she couldn't marry Jerry. It was a simple way out of things, out of difficulties, out of worry, out of everything. But she couldn't do it—she — Eva Duveen — who — once — wouldn't be Harkheimer's girl. There were some things . . .

She put her hand on Jerry's shoulder, much as she would have done six years ago, in the old friendliness when she was a "Broadway favourite," with the press agent slipping her pictures to the newspapers, and Jerry was a funny little man, always good for a joke.

"Mighty good of you, Jerry, old fellow," she said, "but somehow too many years on the road has knocked matrimony and settling down quite out of me. I'm afraid. You're—I do appreciate it, Jerry, but there are a lot of other girls, you know. Good luck to you," and she put out her hand.

"Good-bye, Eva," said Jerry, rather solemnly, as she went out of the stage door.

V

Eva walked down Broadway now. Her feet hurt dreadfully. She could feel the hot pavements through the thin soles. Her blouse clung to her neck and arms. She paused in front of one of the theatres—then drew back. Why had she stopped here?

For there—where she couldn't help seeing it—was the new "paper" of a new Broadway show, featuring Gilbert Willis, whom she had just thought of—and pictures of him, too. Gilbert Willis, who had wanted to marry her!

Wouldn't he laugh, now, Gilbert? He always was the sarcastic one. This would just fit nicely into one of his little jokes. Five years ago—she had turned down Gilbert Willis. It was a joke, wasn't it?

They had been with "The Traders." She had been in the chorus and had had a little part—rather good lines—and Gilbert had been in the chorus, too. The vast chasm between chorus girls and chorus men seemed foolish now. It wasn't foolish then. Why, it was awful, if you dared talk to a chorus man. And Gilbert Willis had been really the most impossible of them all. For, in addition to being a chorus man, he had added to that the indignity of "helping with the trays." That meant he distributed and collected trays for the wardrobe trunks, after the girls had packed their clothes into them, on the nights the show left town and each girl paid him fifty cents a week for it.

Gilbert Willis, slim, brown-haired, sarcastic, a bit stupid, had risen out of the chorus. Now, six years later, he was being featured on Broadway. But, when Eva had refused him, he had been a chorus man. It was Eva, those days, who had ideas of being featured on Broadway. She hadn't wanted to marry — especially someone who would hold her back — like Gilbert. Wouldn't he laugh if he could see her? He mightn't admit he had proposed, but he would laugh just the same. And she . . .

Eva hurried away. She was almost

afraid to stare any longer at his picture, at his thin, rather hard face, his uplifted eyebrows.

She stopped in the drug store at Forty-third Street and bought some cold cream and had an orange phosphate. She was glad the price of it hadn't gone up to ten cents. My, but her throat was dry.

She remembered, then, two agencies in Forty-fifth Street that she hadn't visited lately. She went to both of them, dragging her feet a bit. There was nothing for her at either one.

Then, to a department store near Forty-second Street, where, in the Ladies' Room, she freshened up a bit, taking off her warm coat, shaking the folds out of the Georgette blouse. She sat down in a hot, black leather chair and tried to think things over, decide things.

There wasn't much to decide. What was there? Her money was practically gone—a dollar or two. It had taken her all winter to save it. If she had a job, now, she could draw enough to live on, after the first week of rehearsal and they saw she was going to make good. Then she could get things she had to get before the show went on the road. She certainly needed things. Her heavy coat could do for another year. That was all. But, without a job—what was there to decide? She couldn't marry Jerry. That was settled. There wasn't anyone else—like Harkheimer—now. She couldn't find anyone. New York was too full of pretty girls, young girls with round cheeks, even to think of anything—if she had a job . . .

She had heard about Harper putting on a new road show. She had forgotten to see him about it—still—she knew the answer—an interview, humiliation—

Gus Muddle. It didn't seem so impossible now. There were worse things in the world than burli-que shows. Yes, there were, no job at all, for instance, and no looks—oh, why had she been the little blonde type that fades early—and no ability at any other kind of work? At least in a burli-que show, a good show like Gus Muddle's, you got your money every week. And, at that, it was quite likely the company wasn't any worse than the last ones she had been with. Two shows a day—what difference did it make? Only one jump a week and usually that would be a sleeper jump—lots better than one-night stands.

The Ladies' Room maid moved around with a sudden show of energy. Everyone got up. It was time for the store to close.

Eva hurried out with a little pang of fear. Maybe—Frenyear—maybe the opening in Gus Muddle's show—maybe even that was gone.

She hurried back to Frenyear's, forgetting how badly her feet had hurt.

The office was not closed. The young man was still at the desk, still reading theatrical papers. He glanced up idly.

"I've come—about the card from Mr. Frenyear—to—to the Gus Muddle show," she said.

"Oh, yes, thought you'd be back." The young man took his feet down from a convenient chair, moved ever so little, opened a desk drawer, took out a card.

"Say," he said, "we've sent three other girls over there this afternoon. Two of them ain't had any experience, though, so maybe you'll have a chance. Be over at Wellington Hall, on Sixth Avenue, to-morrow morning at ten prompt."

He straightened his tie.

"You might say Frenyear's got you jobs before," he added, kindly, and then, "Report right away if you get this one."

Eva nodded and took the car. Oh, Frenyear'd get his commission all right, he needn't be afraid of that.

She ate dinner at a lunchroom in Sixth Avenue. Nothing on the menu was quite cold or quite cheap enough. She ordered a stew because she thought it was nourishing. She ate it as slowly as she could.

My, how tired she was! If she only knew somebody in town! If someone would only ask her to go some place pleasant, any place!

She went out on the street again and walked slowly. A man eyed her sharply as she passed. She guessed he was a plain-clothes man and hurried on. She felt a bit indignant.

Eva went back to Broadway again. She stopped in a drug store and had an ice cream, for dessert, spending as much time as she could over it. On the street again she wasted another half hour. Maybe she could see a show. There were several she hadn't tried to see. That would pass the time.

At a Broadway theatre she approached the box office handing in her professional card, slightly brown and bent at the corners.

"Nothing doing," the pert young man at the window snapped at her. She was only a little hurt. She had been turned down before. If she could find a show that wasn't doing any business, she knew they'd be glad to welcome her.

She tried the box office at another theatre a block away. An older man eyed her this time.

"Where are you playing now? Here in New York?"

"No, sir. I'm rehearsing with—with Gus Muddle. This is the show I was with last season."

"All right." He tore a ticket, and handed it to her.

"Hope you'll enjoy the show."

She put on her best manners, her pleasantest smile.

"I'm sure I will. Much obliged," she said, and went in.

The theatre was even hotter than the street had been, a kind of dull, metallic heat.

They had given her a seat in the eighteenth row. She knew no one would take the seat next to her, so she took off her hat for the first time that day and wiped her forehead, which was wet under her hair, and tried to fluff out her flattened coiffure. She tried to powder her nose, but her skin was too damp for powder. She stretched out a little and closed her eyes.

The show was a poor one, a hodge-podge of musical comedy, a "review" that stayed in town because there must be some place for out-of-town people to go.,

The house was almost empty. Eva knew one of the comedians and applauded, hands held high, whenever he came on. Quite decently she tried to applaud for everyone, to earn her seat.

When the show was over she put on her hat and went out in the street again. She thought the air felt a little cooler. At least, it always seemed cooler at night.

If someone would only ask her to have supper with him— She walked slowly to the "L," looking around hopefully, even stopping once and pretending to look in a window. Several people glanced at her, carelessly. No one tried to speak.

At the bottom of the "L" stairs she looked up. The steps seemed unbelievably steep and high. Up and then down again? She decided to take a surface car instead.

A short walk and she was back in Eighth Street. She looked at the letters on the hall table, holding them up, one at a time, to the crooked gas flame. There was no mail for her. She scarcely ever got a letter, anyhow. Who was there to write? Who was there who cared anything about her, in the whole world, anyhow?

She walked very slowly up the stairs. How her feet hurt!

In the stuffy little room, she hurriedly took her clothes off. My, but she was tired! She opened the window wide. It was quiet now. She washed again, at the basin in the corner, and rubbed witchhazel on her swollen feet. She took down her hair, putting the hairpins into a neat little pile. She put some of the new cold cream on her face.

She wound up the clock on the table, slipped on the faded pink cot-

ton crêpe nightgown, turned out the flickering gaslight and got into bed.

Goodness, it felt good, lying down. She'd get up early in the morning and get to Gus Muddle's promptly at ten. Or before. What if one of those other girls had the job? Perhaps she could still get it. She couldn't sing much, but she was a fine dancer and—looked pretty good—from the front—when she was made up—

She must—get—something—to-morrow. . . .

EXTASE

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

THE twilight fell about me
Like some seed-broken husk,
And like a star my soul burst through
The cerements of the dusk.

There was this thing about me—
A garment or a mist—
When lo! it crumbled at my feet
In shattered amethyst.

I walked the hills of wonder.
Like some enchanted sea,
Meaning and measureless, the night
Beat skyward up to me.

Surely, some word was uttered,
Or some far bell was rung
From those sea-hollows where a more
Than phantom surf gave tongue!

Surely, some dream returning
Along the coasts of sleep
Had stripped from me the swathes of dusk,
Had dredged me from the deep!

Across the hills of wonder
My naked body went;
And the white moon gave back my dream,
And dream and moon were blent.

THE MAN WHO DISAPPEARED

By Van Vechten Hostetter

I

TUTTLE, reviewing his forty-second year with his characteristic care and freedom from passion and illusion, saw clearly that his accomplishments had failed to fulfil his expectations. Being without conceit, he did not persuade nor even try to persuade himself that chance or the world's incapability of appreciating his worth had retarded his progress. Being only ordinately ambitious, he was not seriously disturbed. He simply observed that he had only maintained his position in his profession whereas he should have gained a higher one and made that secure. And, having observed so much, he resolved upon greater effort, effort that should over-average the shortcoming of the last year and carry him from eminence to pre-eminence in the next.

Tuttle at forty-three looked back and saw that for all his striving he had gained nothing. In this city that was becoming more and more a city of wonderful and beautiful buildings, he had expected to conceive and rear the most wonderful and the most beautiful. They were to have been imposing monuments of his genius, to stand for ages, strong as the rock and steel of which they were made, inspiring the world. But the greatest works had been done by other men, several of them by younger men whom he had once employed in his own offices. And the Academy Prize, which he had sought, had been taken from him by one whom he had contemptuously regarded as an abecedarian.

Tuttle sat at his desk after his men had gone, his square, sharp chin in his hand, biting his thin lips, gazing darkly out into the dusk. A pile of drawings and blue-prints, brought in for his critical examination, lay forgotten before him. Things that were made of wood and stone and steel he understood: he was studying, trying to analyze, trying to understand the strange structure of his own nature. Examining the creative work of another architect, he could discover or sense unerringly all the purposes that had been in mind, all the effects that had been sought, knowing how the builder had succeeded here and why he had failed there: but the purpose of his own being seemed utterly beyond his understanding, despite his vague yet positive consciousness that the purpose was failing. Why with his genius—which by cold introspection he knew was his—and with his energy he should be falling farther away from the goal he sought was a problem he strove in vain to solve.

The more he pondered and struggled with it the more hopeless seemed the solution. He was filled with uneasiness and he felt that uneasiness was giving way to alarm. Still, since he was but ordinately eager for the greatest success, why should he be so alarmed at the prospect of failure to achieve his highest ambitions? He was without family and without disposition to have one; to be admired by the world and esteemed and envied by his professional fellows were desirable, but not profoundly so; he had more than money enough for his needs and his wants, which were simple; what did it matter, then, if he should never be the greatest builder in the world? What would it

matter if he should abandon his work and his ambition and spend the rest of his life in—simply living? There was no reason that he could see or find, still he knew it was impossible for him to do that.

Tuttle stared into the darkness that had followed the dusk. The building across the way and the street far below were deserted. The thought came, making him more miserable, that the thousands who had been all around him through the day had all gone somewhere to share their joys or bear their sorrows with others. Tuttle had no one to go to, and he needed some one. Through the transom behind him the hall light shone on the window pane, and as he saw his face reflected, with dark brows contracted and forehead wrinkled, he suffered more intensely with the deeper realization that some strange thing was wrong with him and that he was sorely in need of some one to go to for comfort and courage and advice.

Tuttle realized painfully that he had grown away from his friends. He had not realized it before because he had not felt the need of them. There were men that he had been close to here in the city, when he had set out on his career; he saw them at long intervals now and only to talk of casual things. His employees were of course, employees, and the men that had left him and gone out for themselves were—former employees and competitors. The men that bought his services were business men and he had always dealt with them as such. In his searching for a friend, Tuttle was driven back to his university days, and there with some surprise he found one, or, rather, a possible one. It was Henry Jardine. All the others had forgotten him, no doubt, as easily as he had forgotten them. Probably, he thought, they had forgotten each other.

He had almost forgotten Jardine, too, and would have done so but for occasional letters, letters that had brought no response from him, despite their warm friendliness. It seemed strange that Jardine should have kept writing to him all these years, but he was glad he had. And Jardine had always begged to hear from Tuttle "for old time's sake," and said he should love to see him again and "talk everything over," "even though you've become a big man and I'm still a little one and always shall be." It seemed even stranger that this man should still care for him as Tuttle recalled little "shabby turns" of which he had made Jardine the victim in those old days.

Tuttle got up and switched on the light and went searching through his files. He never destroyed a letter—a wise business policy that more than once had proved its value to him—and he knew he had Jardine's. He found them and read them over. They were friendly and full of sympathy. He had run through them hastily when they were received and had not fully realized how deep they were; now they soothed his spirit and reassured him in a measure, at the same time filling him with a desire to see and grip hands and speak with this man whose affection for him had not died.

When he had read the last letter, Tuttle left a brief and characteristically unexplanatory note advising his assistant that he was going away for a few days and set off to see Henry Jardine, fifteen hundred miles away.

II

It was one of those young and robust Iowa communities that are much more than towns and a little less than cities. Tuttle arrived in the early night and telephoned Jardine. His heart was thrilled as he heard the voice, big and heavy, a little deeper than when he had heard it last. "By God! This is great! I thought you'd given me up for good." He was the same genial, simple-minded, open-hearted fellow he had been in school. "Where are you now?"

"At the station; I just came in on the Rock Island."

"Oh, that's the Union Depot," Jardine laughed. "Well, you wait right

there about half an hour and I'll drive in for you. You see, I live in the country, but it won't be long."

Jardine bent over him and squeezed his hand until it ached. Tuttle was no little man, but Jardine was almost a giant; he had been considered a rare football prospect; but had been found too slow and too lazy.

"By God, Tuttle, it's great to see you again. You don't know how hard I've hoped for this. Sometimes I've been near getting on a train and going East for you. What brings you out this way?"

"Why, I just came to see you," said Tuttle.

"Just to see me," Jardine cried in wonder. "Well, that beats everything. I'd have thought I was in great luck if you just dropped off to see me, and here you've made a special trip."

"It's worth it, old man," Tuttle said. "I needed to see you. I feel better already."

"So do I," said Jardine, picking up Tuttle's bag. "Here's the car."

Tuttle followed him into the little one-seated roadster, which looked unimpressive enough but throbbed with power as they shot away. Like a skilled driver knowing his way, Jardine sped the motor through the dimly lighted and unlighted streets, and in two or three minutes they were on the country road.

Tuttle studied him and his heart was filled with envy. Jardine was bigger and fatter than ever, as much a good-natured, care-free boy as in school days. There was no grey in his yellow hair and there were no lines in his face like those in Tuttle's. His eyes were clear and bright, clearer and brighter, it seemed to Tuttle, than he had ever seen them before. As they bore steadily on the road ahead the blue in them flashed and glittered like steel. Tuttle could not remember that flash and glitter in them in university days.

"You haven't changed much," Jardine said at length.

"A lot more than you have," Tuttle answered. "I've changed a lot more in looks and a lot more in other ways."

"I can't see it," said Jardine. "I guess it's mostly in your mind. You see you've been in that fast, heart-breaking city game, and after a fellow's been in that a while he gets an idea sometimes that it's smashing him."

"I don't know whether it's smashing me or not," said Tuttle. "That's one of the things I want to find out. Maybe you can help me."

"I think I can do something for you," Jardine said thoughtfully. "I'll take up your case as soon as we get home. I guess you've got a lot to tell me about yourself, Tuttle." His fat lips curled in a smile that might have been a little cynical if the lips had not been so fat. "You always were good at telling about yourself, anyway. I'll tell you about myself first and get that out of the way. It won't take long."

Tuttle smiled a little shamedly at the allusion to his own egotism, but said nothing.

"I don't know but I might have made a big name for myself," Jardine went on, "if I'd tried, but I didn't. I found this place and saw it was growing and offered pretty fair prospects for a man who wanted a nice little comfortable fortune and didn't want to work too hard to get it, so I just settled down here and started building houses—two-story ones, mostly—and selling them as fast as I built them and then building more. I guess that's about all there is to it. Nothing wonderful, nothing unusual. The houses are pretty good; nobody has ever been cheated on them; still, any ordinary first class man could build just as good ones."

"Married?" asked Tuttle.

"I should say no! Never fell in love since I was able to keep a wife. I've got a pretty nice little place out here that would make a good home for some woman, but I don't know of any that'll ever be in it. This house is a little out of the ordinary and I'm just a little bit proud of it. Here we are now!"

Jardine had turned sharply and now shot the car up a wide side road, stop-

ping it with a jerk a little way from the house.

Tuttle, quite unprepared for what he saw, repressed a smile with extreme difficulty. Then as he looked first at the building and again at Jardine, amusement gave way to a feeling something like pity. The thing was a joke architecturally, yet to Jardine it must be an artistic creation—a supreme effort to rise above the commonplace. Surely it was above the commonplace. It was a big, square one-story structure of grey or brown stone, lying as if hidden among lofty maples that rose all around it. It was unlighted and long rows of square, deep windows, darker than its dark walls, accentuated its grim aspect. It looked more like some merciless prison house than a home, and the suggestion of a place of confinement was more impressed upon Tuttle's mind by a round tower that rose from one corner, cold and black among the trees.

Tuttle could not help smiling inwardly as he recalled Jardine's innocent and pathetic belief that he might have made a name for himself if he had gone among the world's great builders. Yet the smile did not last long, for there was something effectively oppressive about the appearance of this house, as Jardine called it, which did not conduce to smiling.

"Poor Jardine," thought Tuttle. "God knows what effect he was after, but he did get some effect. Nobody could deny him that."

Within Tuttle found an atmosphere of cheerful hominess that contrasted sharply with the forbidding exterior of the place. He remembered that Jardine in school had shown a fondness for good books and pictures and had displayed some artistic taste in the arrangement of his living quarters. These had not failed to grow and develop. Perhaps, after all, Jardine with ambition and the benefits of association with great artists might have been himself no mean artist. Tuttle was comfortably surprised to have his first dismal impression dissolved and his heart grew lighter as he sat and smoked before the hearth and listened to Jardine's steady and rather inconsequential talk as he brought lunch.

"Sorry I can't give you a fancy party," he said. "Might have arranged it, but you didn't give me much notice. I used to have some servants, but they're a nuisance; I let them all go. I never thought much of the servant idea, anyhow. I eat in town most of the time, but I always have a little stuff around that I can cook up myself and then some canned stuff. How do you live?" Without allowing Tuttle opportunity to answer, Jardine went off into speculation. "A valet, I suppose, and a fine apartment or a house and a housekeeper and lots of worry about how honest the servants are. Servants are a bad thing. You never can trust a servant. Anybody who will be a personal servant for somebody else is either too ignorant or too dishonest to be any good."

So he went on, giving Tuttle time only for "yesses" and "noes" until they had finished their repast of cold chicken and bread and beans and coffee and cheese. Then, after Tuttle had lighted his cigar, he filled a blackened pipe and settled back in his chair.

"Now tell me what brings you here. What's the trouble?"

"There's trouble surely," said Tuttle, relieved to be able to open his heart at last, "but I don't just know what it is."

"I knew there was," Jardine said. "You would never have come if there hadn't been."

"That's not very kind," Tuttle said, a little unhappily. He hesitated, somewhat disinclined to speak, but his need was too great. "The trouble is just this, old man: I'm failing, breaking—and I don't know why. I'm falling back, falling back all the time and all the time I'm fighting to go ahead. It's getting on my nerves. If I were sick, if I could find anything wrong with me I could remedy it or try to anyway, but I can't find it. Jardine, it's just hell."

"Listen," said Jardine. "What I'm going to tell you will hurt—at first—but it may do you good. It's too late

to talk much to-night, but I'll tell you something about yourself and you can think it over during the night. To-morrow we'll talk some more."

"Go on," said Tuttle, preparing for a blow. There was something impressive in the look on Jardine's face despite its round fatness.

"You're unsocial. You're utterly selfish. A normal man may be ambitious or unambitious. If he's ambitious he has legitimate social reasons for his ambition. He wants to succeed for the benefit of the world or his wife or his children or his friends. Every normal man can tell you why he wants to succeed. You want to succeed and you don't know why. It's not because you want to make anybody happy with your success. You simply want to succeed and that's all. And a man like that can't succeed for the simple reason that he isn't a complete man.

"Tuttle, I know more about you than you suppose. I've watched you. I was your friend all through school. You had other friends. Every one you used just as long as you had anything to use them for and then you threw them away. When you were in trouble you went to your friends. When they were in trouble they went to you—until they found out it was useless. Here's one small thing I remember. You were hard up one day and borrowed my evening clothes to pawn. Having got the money you needed, you forgot all about the evening clothes and me. I had to go and get them out. There were a thousand things like that. I have done a thousand things for you and yet you would never do anything for me, no matter how easy. I said to myself you would never really succeed. I watched to see if I was right. Why, your reputation is based on what the men you hired did. They worked for you because they believed in you, and when they found out what you were they left you. You took the credit for what they did. They despise you as everybody who went to school with you came to despise you. Your only hope, Tuttle, is in learning to be a real friend, learning not to use people but to serve them. Your only hope is to learn the beauty of reciprocity. Your only hope is in learning not to forget the men who help you, not to desert them as soon as you have made all the use of them you can."

Jardine stopped, but he still looked hard into Tuttle's eyes. His face, fat as it was, was hard and his eyes flashed yet seemed to burn steadily. Tuttle was almost frightened.

"I guess I came to the wrong man," he managed to say.

"No," said Jardine. "I told you it would hurt, but you mustn't be foolish and think I'm not your friend. I've told you the only thing that can help you in God's world—if it is God's—and I wouldn't tell you if I weren't your friend . . . wouldn't take the trouble."

He got up slowly and knocked the ashes from his pipe.

"Come on now, Tuttle; I'll take you up to your room and you can think it all over during the night and you'll feel a lot better in the morning."

"All right," said Tuttle; "all right, old man. I guess I can take bitter medicine."

Hurt as he was now, he could admit to himself that the treatment might not be without benefit, and if he liked it less by daylight it would be easy enough to cut his visit short.

"Good," said Jardine, leading the way upstairs. "I'll have to put you up in the tower, I guess. It's the only bedroom I've got that's fit for high class company. You won't mind, though. You'll find the air's good up here—better than in one of those city skyscrapers."

As they reached the little square hallway, Jardine dropped his burnt-out match and fumbled for the light switch. When he found it they were standing before the opened door of a dark room. The door was a massive thing of stone or concrete. The room was a cell.

Cold with dread, Tuttle turned half away, meaning to run. Into his mind had flashed the horrible truth, the mean-

ing of Jardine's supposed affection that lived in spite of neglect, the meaning of his effusive manner, his inordinate joy at Tuttle's visit, his extreme loquacity, the building of the grotesque house. The man was insane. Tuttle screamed as Jardine's powerful arms caught and lifted him and hurled him into the blackness of the cell. Dazed, he lay there and saw the light fade as the ponderous door swung and closed.

Then he heard bolts shot home and the crazy triumphant laughter of Jardine as he went down the stairs.

III

LIKE many another man who has lived through the panic of fear, Tuttle found his wits returning sharper than he had ever known them to be before. And he had the courage of a man with nothing to lose. He must escape and he would escape. A madman's brain must have slipped somewhere, could not have barred every way to freedom. Criminals before now had pitted their wits and resource against the genius and science of prison builders and the vigilance of prison keepers. They had driven and ground their way to liberty. What they, themselves half crazed, had been able to accomplish against cold reason, surely could be possible for him against a lunatic.

In the utter darkness Tuttle surveyed and studied his prison. It was a square room nine or ten feet in length and width. It was of stone or concrete. Tuttle could feel the smooth blocks and the rough lines of mortar between them. The ceiling he could touch with his finger tips when he lifted his arms. In the door, some three feet from the floor, was an aperture five or six inches square, evidently to permit the passage of food and water and air. Opposite was a similar aperture to admit light and air. At any rate he should not die of suffocation.

Examining these openings, Tuttle learned that the walls of his prison measured some four inches in thickness. To cut through the cement would not be an impossible task, given time and the implements. Tuttle took out his penknife and dug at the mortar viciously. The blade snapped. Well, he had something still to work with. The handle of the knife was bone and brass. With this he went feverishly to work beneath the window. There was no time to be lost. The operation would require weeks—months, perhaps, with the soft tool—and he must work against a possible time when some mad notion to come in and kill him would seize Jardine. The great stone block measured two feet by one, and with it removed it would be simple for Tuttle to push his body through the enlarged opening and lower himself by means of a rope made of his clothing. He was not more than fifty feet from the ground and he could drop the last twenty if necessary.

When the first grey of dawn showed through the window, Tuttle lay down to rest his aching shoulders and arms and hands, and fell asleep. He was awakened in daylight by the smell of food and coffee. They had been set in the little opening in the base of the door: so Jardine did not mean—now, at any rate, to starve him to death.

It was strong ham and eggs and greasy fried potatoes, an unattractive mess to Tuttle, but he took it and ate it avidly. The coffee was in a tall tin can. There was plenty of it and Tuttle found it better than he had hoped. It gave him strength and courage. He was prepared to face Jardine if he should come for him; he almost wanted Jardine to come and throw open the door, giving him the chance to fight for his life—but Jardine did not come. Presently Tuttle heard the heavy chugging of the car and then heard it growing fainter and fainter until it was lost. Jardine had gone to town.

Tuttle could see nothing but the tops of trees through his window in the thick wall. There was no possibility of calling help. He was facing away from the main road, he supposed. There was nothing to do but pursue the slow method he had adopted in the night.

All day he worked, scratching and digging againt the hard mortar until his fingers were numb and all his muscles ached, resting and going back again and again to his torturing task.

He was glad when evening came and he heard Jardine return. This compelled cessation of his labour for a while, for Jardine might come to see if his prisoner was still safe and Tuttle could not risk discovery of his plan.

Presently Jardine's step sounded outside and Tuttle saw his fat hand set more food and coffee within reach. In a moment he was gone again and Tuttle sighed heavily as he took up the plate and moved back from the door. It was fried porkchops and potatoes tonight. Tuttle worn with his day's labour, found them more appetizing than the delicacies of his hotel at home. The chops he gnawed until they were clean—Jardine granted him no knife nor fork. When he had finished he smashed off part of one bone under his heel and put the rest back in the aperture for Jardine to take away. That bit of bone would not be missed by Jardine and it would serve if the knife handle should be worn away too soon.

Tuttle dug away at the wall until he fell exhausted and sleep brought him to another day. This was as the first had been. After Jardine had gone again Tuttle came to a full realization of what was in the madman's mind—solitary confinement. Crazy as he was, he yet knew that to be shut away from the world, where he could see no man, no woman, no living thing, would break the reason of the strongest man and make him a miserable lunatic. The thought filled Tuttle with a new dread, which grew more terrible as he saw how little all his labour had so far accomplished against the merciless wall.

He realized that, despite his lack of intimate relationship with men, his association with them, such as it was, had been essential to his being. He realized he could not live without them. He wondered what they were doing back home, wondered if they had yet become alarmed or would become alarmed when day after day he failed to appear. He had told no one where he was going. He had come here at night. Suppose he should be searched for, would he be found? Could his mind and soul bear this utter isolation from all association with living things until he could escape? The fear that it could not, grew in his heart until it throbbed. His whole body was trembling with fever and chill. He caught up the knife and rushed frantically at the wall, but the strength was gone from his arms and hands and fingers. He fell to pacing back and forth in his narrow prison, striving to regain his courage, but there was no place in his heart or mind for courage to come in. The horrible picture of the end, two lunatics—himself and Jardine—fighting to the death of both in this crazy house, filled his brain. So through the day. When Jardine came at night with more food Tuttle wanted to speak to him and possibly hasten the end of the horror, but he was afraid.

Day after day and night after night passed. Visions of coming madness filled Tuttle's brain in his waking hours and dreams of it tortured his sleep and made it a nightmare. His mind was breaking; he knew it was breaking; the end was sure. Working against the stone was hopeless. There was no strength in his arms. He was lost.

Then one night when Tuttle awoke from a ghastly dream he heard a scraping sound outside his cell. The first hope he had known in weeks flickered feebly in his heart. He recalled stories of men in solitary confinement who had been saved from madness by insects and vermin. He ran to the opening in the base of the door and reached out as far as he could toward the floor. He could not touch it; he could reach nothing. Still he heard the scraping sound. He went back and found the tall coffee can and set it on the floor outside.

It was a rat. He heard its sharp little claws scratching eagerly on the tin. In another instant the thing had climbed within his reach; he caught it with fierce joy and took it into his cell.

Tuttle, sitting in the middle of the hard floor, held the animal in his lap and stroked it tenderly and reassuringly, as if it had been a kitten. He could feel its heart fluttering fearfully against his leg, but it lay quite still, and as Tuttle's hand moved over its body he knew why this wild thing had so willingly come to him. It was starved. It had been too weak to scale the wall to the opening and make its own way.

When fear had been allayed Tuttle provided bits of meat, the leavings of his evening meal, and the rat ate them voraciously, gnawing feebly at the bones. Tuttle watched with keen interest in the shaft of faint moonlight that came through the window. The thing had been ready to die. Caught somewhere up in this hell, it had fought for freedom until it could fight no longer. Its claws were worn off and useless from hopeless scratching against the stones.

Day followed day and week week. Tuttle shared his coarse meals, pushed into the cell by the same crazy, unseen hand, with his fellow in misery, and the stone floor was their bed. The study of this rat afforded all the diversion his mind demanded if not all it desired. Tuttle discovered that it was capable of affection and knew that it regarded him as its saviour with human gratitude. He learned that it possessed intelligence apart from instinct and could be taught and trained as a dog. In a short time it understood that at a snapping and pointing of his fingers it must scamper to one certain corner which could not be visible to Jardine should he by any chance or freak peer into the cell. Jardine, lunatic as he was, might be still sane enough to know that this animal could save his prisoner from raving madness. To leave the cell was quite impossible for the rat with its crippled feet, but it seemed to have no desire to do so; this, Tuttle thought, was the natural result of its horrible experience outside.

Tuttle ground away patiently around the great block under the window. His mind was free. He had been here so long that he no longer feared a new turn of Jardine's crazed brain would defeat his plan. He grew strong and worked harder until the muscles in his fingers and arms were like steel. The darkness of the cell was sufficient protection against discovery by night, and when Jardine was heard lumbering up the stairs it was easy to fill the crevices with a paste made of old bread that was kept for the purpose.

The time came when Tuttle knew that six hours only lay between him and liberty. Through the day he had striven, but all his labour had not been enough to complete the task. Caution and the love of liberty fought in his breast. Should he wait until Jardine's usual departure in the morning or should he go on to-night? He had worn the mortar so thin in places that further grinding to-night was dangerous unless he meant to escape to-night. Jardine, no doubt, scanned the window with his crazy eyes every day before he went away.

Tuttle tore his coat into strips and tied them end to end, testing them as well as he could with his powerful arms. He could make no other test. He laughed as he thought of the grotesque picture he would present to the town, coatless, haggard and bearded. He would be thought a lunatic surely until he could tell of his months of torture.

With what was left of the knife handle—he had saved it for this purpose—Tuttle worked hour after hour, grinding away at the cement. The moon rose and sank and still he dug, never stopping even to brush away the sweat that boiled and flowed down into his eyes and over his face. No second could be spared. He could not rest his aching arms. He had misjudged his

strength, but he had broken through the wall in places and now it was too late to delay.

Dawn was in the sky when the last bit of cement gave way and Tuttle dragged the heavy stone into his tortured arms, and summoning all his strength, set it gently down on the floor. In another instant he had looped one end of his life rope around the block and flung the other from the window. The opening was still none too large, but Tuttle, after one quick glance at the earth below pushed himself through and started down, hand under hand. His heart hammered in his breast. Fear of discovery at this last instant assailed his brain. The blood rushed to his head and throbbed and pounded. His back ached and burned with the strain on the overtaxed muscles. His arms seemed pulling out of their sockets. Once his hand slipped and the cloth cut it, but he caught himself and went on, biting his lip until the blood ran from it, too, when he held his weight with the bleeding hand. Then there rose a wild cry, half human, half animal, a prolonged plaintive cry of misery—the wail of a child or a woman in distress—the squeal of a rat. Tuttle heard it pierce the still morning like a shriek from hell and his blood went cold in his body.

He dropped, fell forward on his hands, picked himself up weakly to run. Then there was a crash of glass and Jardine, a fat, wild thing, naked with that crazy glitter in his eyes, sprang upon him, bearing him down. He beat his head on the ground until he was helpless. Then he carried him back into the house and up the stairs and into another cell. There he threw him on the floor.

"Wasn't I right?" he asked. "I guess you think I'm crazy—*old man*—" —he laughed—"but I'm not. I'll see that you don't get out of here, and I'll see you have no friends to use and abandon."

Then he went out and swung the door and Tuttle heard bolts clanking into their home.

LURES

By Babette Deutsch

SWART rusty pine-boughs hold
Thin threads of pallid gold.
At the white highroad's turn
Coppery bushes burn.
The sky is clear and green.
The light is hard and keen.
But sharper, shriller, cries
Your absent face . . . your eyes.

HUMOUR is the consciousness of the nothingness of anything.

DAY DREAMS

By Mary Allen

THE tired little working girl wove day dreams.

"I shall marry a tall, handsome millionaire. . . .

"I shall ride in a purple limousine upholstered in pale violet, with my little Pom at my side.

"I shall select jewels to match the colour of the gowns I wear.

"I shall live in a large white house with servants in green livery to attend me.

"There will always be faint strains of hidden music and the fragrance of fresh flowers.

"As I stroll across the terrace a peacock will follow me. . . ."

* * * * *

After vainly trying to attract her attention, the tall, handsome millionaire, who had always longed to marry a girl just like the tired little working girl arose and left the street-car.

HUMORESQUE

By Nelson Antrim Crawford

WHEN Arthur's slender lavender wife died in bearing a child,
He wept decorously,
Bore himself punctiliously in the ritual of the requiem,
Gave the courteous young priest a gold coin,
Then went home
And composed, with the aid of a rhyming dictionary,
A ballade of sorrow
And a rondel about death
In the manner of Henley.

THE way to be liked is simple. Always listen sympathetically when men boast of their wives and women complain of their husbands.

WHEN a man laughs at his troubles he loses his friends: they can never forgive the loss of their prerogative.

THE MAN OF FASCINATION

By Curt Hansen

HE came among us with an air of mystery. I suppose that is the reason that he played the devil with our womenfolk. Señor Ramon José Zerenes y Oliviera—or something like that. I don't profess to accuracy in the matter. We called him Mr. Oliviera for short, or simply The Don, and we knew him as a Spanish nobleman. As to looks, he was only passably handsome. Very likely French novelists would have discovered his secret, the peculiar and indefinable quality which makes a man fascinating to women. We men never noticed it.

But fascinating he surely was. I don't propose to set forth at length the scandals to which he gave occasion. There were no less than eight women whose names were mentioned in connection with his. Let us make the usual allowance for gossip and call the number four—of three, I know personally. That is no bad record for one season. Our Don kept all of them going at the same time; how—only he and a certain ex-archangel know. When Mrs. B—— was found in his company, he was as calm and unperturbed as the proverbial cucumber. B—— called him a scoundrel and a dog and threatened to horsewhip him. I think he did try, but Oliviera was more than a match for him in strength, as he very plainly was in power of feminine appeal.

He appeared next year at Narragansett—quite as suave, quite as courtly, quite as fascinating, as before. His bad reputation among women helped him rather than hurt him. There was no open scandal that summer, but an immense deal of whispered gossip. It was in the same winter, however, that the unsavory business of Madame M, the wife of a foreign ambassador, occurred. Being both of nations that countenance duelling, Oliviera and the Count met on some little island in Lake Huron, and had it out. The Count must either have been killed or severely wounded. We never heard of him in America again.

So much our Spaniard had in the past. There was a woman in New York, a Mrs. Fred Guthrie, who was eager to play with fire and scandalized her friends and infuriated her husband by inviting the Don to a dinner and dance. The Don was unexceptionable in his demeanour to the ladies, grave, quiet, taciturn. The open dislike of all the men present seemed to trouble him. Certain it is that he spent more time in eliciting monosyllables from his host than in returning the desperately lively sallies of his imprudent hostess.

His hostess was very imprudent. She was indignant at the discourtesy of her husband and his friends. As a matter of fact, she was deeply hurt at Fred's failure to comprehend her meaning. She had intended the whole thing to be a veiled compliment to him—at least at first. Afterwards, of course, it became an assertion of her individuality.

But she had no intention of being Number Thousand and Three in Leporello's catalogue. Very far from it. In the first place, she was of too fine a type for a vulgar intrigue, and then, she was intensely combative. The Don drew her towards him. There was no denying that. His presence had a direct and immediate effect upon her. All

the more reason, she felt, to meet him and destroy him. And she did.

The Don visited the Guthries' often. He still had the *entrée* to a number of houses, but he rarely went anywhere else. Scandal got busy at once. But Scandal could not point to a single instance when Guthrie was not also there, or some equally unimpeachable *garde d'honneur* was not present. Therefore, since Scandal may not be cheated out of its prey, ugly rumours got busy with Fred. Some one in the street once called him Amphitryon. Luckily Fred didn't understand him.

But Mrs. Fred both heard and understood. She grew pale to the tips of her translucently delicate ears. The Don was greeted with even greater warmth when he called that evening, and went away with the complacent satisfaction that another woman was his worshipper. He was more than complacent about it. He was exceedingly excited. For Mr. Oliviera had committed a primal blunder. He had allowed himself—and I verily believe for the first time in his life—to fall in love with Mrs. Fred.

And then began the strangest thing of all. Oliviera's attentions to the lady had become an open chase. He hung about her box at theatre and opera. He followed her at dances. He gazed moon-struck at her wherever she was. She, for her part now that she was sure of him, took the whole world into her confidence. Oliviera was snubbed in the presence of everyone. Dance-engagements with him were forgotten. Very often no one was home when he called. Mrs. Fred showered more attention on any and every whipper-snapper of twenty-one than she had for this seasoned tamer of women. In two months he was the laughing-stock of his set.

Oliviera could stand everything but ridicule. He literally fled from New York, and even from America. Fred Guthrie boasted of his wife till men yawned in his face and told him to shut up.

The Guthries ran across him in Paris. They mutually cut each other dead, of course. In Paris, however, Don Oliviera was quite a figure. Somehow or other, he had got money, plenty of it—which he had never had particularly in America. Many of Guthrie's friends in the American colony thought a great deal of him—stood in awe of him a little. He was even presented to Mrs. Guthrie, and both carried themselves off very well—all politeness on his part, all self-possessed aplomb on hers. They met only once or twice.

"I say, Guthrie," someone once asked Fred, "did you know Oliviera in New York?"

"Oh, slightly," answered Fred.

"Slightly?" There was the faintest indication of malice in the tone.

"Why?" asked Fred, uneasily.

"Oh, nothing, but I've been told you knew him very well."

Fred shrugged his shoulders, and passed on. He heard hints afterwards, and thought he detected lurking sneers on several faces. A Mrs. Crivelli, an American who had married an Italian, once told him that the Don had come from America with a curious reputation, curious in that it consisted of the wrecks of various female reputations.

"Indeed," said Fred. "How very interesting!"

"Isn't it?" murmured the lady. "How strange it must seem to meet on formal and distant terms people with whom one has been so very, very intimate." She looked obliquely at Fred, and then at her fingertips again.

"My dear Mrs. Crivelli," answered Fred, "Don Oliviera's intimacy with Nell was something I'm sure he would be the last person in the world to boast of or even to recall."

Mrs. Crivelli gasped. "Good gracious, Mr. Guthrie, you are a most disconcerting personage. I assure you I did not intend to allude—"

"But I do wish to allude to it. If I find that Don Oliviera has been indulging himself in the pastime of lying, I shall deal with him quite differently."

"Don Oliviera is a gentleman. Can you conceive of a man of his birth boasting of a woman's friendship, Mr. Guthrie?"

"Not only can I conceive of it," said Fred, "but from my little association with men of his birth, I should find it exceedingly likely."

Mrs. Crivelli was beginning to become a little afraid. "Please forget what I have said," she begged hurriedly, "and don't question me any further. Please!"

Fred found out other things, quite without questioning. Oliviera probably had said nothing. But he had allowed hints to be made uncontradicted, which would indicate that his last season in New York had a very different outcome, and that the dainty Mrs. Guthrie had also appreciated the difference between a money-grubbing American husband and a Spanish nobleman. If it was deliberate, it was a cowardly revenge for his defeat.

Fred was not clever at this sort of thing. He was filled with rage at Oliviera and would indubitably have provoked a serious scandal which could scarcely have failed to be the very worst thing possible in the world for Mrs. Fred. But he never ran across him. In lieu of that, he proceeded to tell a number of things he knew or thought he knew, of the Don, and they were considerable. The "affairs" could not hurt his reputation with Parisians, but one or two other things did hurt. It had been currently believed of Oliviera that he had now and then allowed himself to become financially indebted to persons to whom only a very different sort of indebtedness is permitted. The French have a very ugly word for such gentlemen.

The Guthries left Paris for Italy and spent a few weeks at Nice. Fred paid a visit to Monte Carlo, then several visits. At the third, he came back, haggard, blear-eyed and white lipped. He had lost nothing less than twice his yearly income. Mrs. Fred blew him up for it soundly, as he deserved, and prepared to return to America, in the good, common-sense fashion that distinguished her. Fred went out to borrow some money.

He did not return that night nor the next day. Mrs. Fred hurried to Monte Carlo. His hotel-room was empty. She found him at last, more than half-drunk, wandering in the park, weakly trying to convince himself that it was his duty to shoot an unusually big hole into his skull. She took the revolver away that he held in his hand, and brought him back to the hotel. He confessed with much maudlin sobbing—(the poor fellow was to be excused for it, it was an unusual condition for him)—that he had raised five thousand dollars and had taken them to Monte Carlo to retrieve his fortunes and had left them there. This did not seem to Mrs. Fred an adequate ground for suicide, so she coldly proceeded to cross-examine him. It seems that the sum had really been ten thousand and that the second five thousand had not really been borrowed. To put it bluntly, they had been stolen—being the jeweller's estimate of certain jewellery belonging to a friend.

Mrs. Fred dug her chin into her fists and looked at her husband—now in the last stages of gibbering intoxication. He fell asleep on the couch, moaning and throwing his arms about. Mrs. Fred paced the floor. If they wished to escape, they could get away easily, but they could scarcely escape from the story if it came out. Besides if the matter were turned over to the police promptly, it was doubtful whether they could even make a physical escape.

Mrs. Fred was still pacing the floor, late in the afternoon. Then she went to her room. She was certainly not prepared, after an hour of ineffectual attempts at repose, to be roused by the maid with a sealed letter. She found it to be a note from the commissary of police to the effect that a man claiming to be Mr. Guthrie had been found wandering in a seemingly irresponsible fashion in the park. Would she call at police-headquarters at once?

She was there in half an hour. The

number designated in the letter, No. 37 Rue Ste. Nicole, was a curious unofficial looking building, not in the least like an American police-station. From the outside, at least, it was undistinguishable from the numerous hotels that flanked it and faced. She was received in an entrance hall by a grave-looking flunkey and was ushered into a room some distance away that looked for all the world like the principal room of an *apartement meublé*. There she took a seat. The monosyllabic servant disappeared and she waited, waited with impatience and anxiety for the commissary to enter. However, instead of that officer, she saw a very familiar figure open the door before her, and she found herself staring in a sort of stupefaction at Oliviera, and hearing him gravely and quietly say that he was glad to see her.

"You?" she gasped, "you? Where is the commissary?"

"It was a ruse," he said smiling, as though he were paying a trivial compliment, "a ruse to get you here."

"I heard of Mr. Guthrie's ill-luck," he went on, as she said nothing, "and I was almost sure of the sequel. Shall I ring for refreshments?"

She cowered in her chair and looked at him.

"You will allow me," Oliviera rang. The servant who had before admitted Mrs. Guthrie entered, and received some brief orders in Catalan from his master.

Mrs. Guthrie rose. What she intended to do, she did not in the least know, but she turned to the door. Oliviera did not make any attempt to stop her. It was quite unnecessary. The door was firmly locked, and could evidently only be opened by those familiar with the house. It was too late. She clung to the knob sick at heart.

"Now that you fully realize the situation," went on Oliviera with the soft even voice which constituted so large a part of his charm, "let me beg one thing of you. Do not make any appeal to my chivalry. It is done very often. In fact, Spain is credited with an amount of it to which I am afraid it can make no pretension. For my part, I am rather of the opinion of the proverb which says that men of my race do not relish romance without a little after-taste of blood and—shall we say?—of mire?"

"The mire—I can understand." Mrs. Fred did not recognize her own voice. "I can almost see it. And the blood—you have provided for that also?"

"I fight a duel to-night."

"To-night?" she exclaimed, looking up.

"After—"

She shuddered.

"Don Oliviera." She left the door and walked slowly toward him. "You have forestalled an appeal to your chivalry."

"Please," with a deprecating gesture.

"Will you trust mine?"

"I beg your pardon," he exclaimed in surprise.

"If I give you my word of honour to return here, as soon as I have arranged some private affairs, will you trust my word?"

Oliviera looked at her. She was very good to look at. Twice he began to speak and twice he checked himself. "Will I take your word—but you are not serious."

"I am very serious."

"Your word to return here, if I let you go? What affairs?" he asked suddenly.

"My husband needs five thousand dollars to save himself from the police—"

"I know—I know," said he.

"I wish to get the money for him."

"And how do you expect to get it?"

"I have jewels and friends."

"And then you will come back?"

"Yes."

"Openly back, to this house, which all the neighbours know is mine, neighbours who know you?"

"Yes." Her heart thumped quite audibly.

Oliviera turned to his desk. He took from it several bills of large denomination and added a cheque of his own.

"May I have the honour," he said, "of advancing you the money?" She took them, thanked him, and turned to go. Oliviera opened the door for her, but before she reached the street door he begged her to wait a moment. The Catalan servant appeared at his master's ring and retired after receiving a brief order. He returned immediately with a heavy veil, which Oliviera almost forced Mrs. Guthrie to put on. Then he conducted her to the street, and waited bare-headed till she had turned the corner. She hurried to the hotel.

Fred was still sleeping heavily. She woke him, asked him a few necessary questions, and hardly answering his half-awake queries, quickly disappeared. It took her over an hour to get the jewels back.

Fred, now quite roused, only partly aware of what had happened, waited for her nervously. She had very little to say, however, and he did not press her to tell him where she had got the money. He hastened to return the jewels to their owner and his wife sat in her room tapping the floor with her feet, wondering if she dared, if she might, keep her word.

Why she finally did, I cannot imagine. There is no need to repeat the leering suggestion in which so many indulged themselves. I prefer to believe that it was a sudden fierce resolve to maintain her word, to shame the rascal into the admission that a promise might be kept even if extorted by such damnable compulsion—who knows what else? Whatever it may have been at eleven o'clock she was ringing the bell at No. 37 Rue Ste. Nicole violently and breathlessly. When no answer came she seems to have been filled with a sort of rage and pulled at the bell again and again, till many windows were opened in the adjoining house.

A noise of groping among chairs told her she had roused somebody. A harsh voice in very bad French asked who was there. It was the Catalan servant.

"It is I," she said. She could have laughed at herself the next minute, but the door opened at once and the Catalan admitted her into the house. He recognized her immediately.

"Don Ramon will return shortly," he said. "Will Madame enter?"

His lack of all signs of surprise gave her a little shiver of disgust. She sank into a chair.

A great wave of horror passed over her. She rose, turned upon the door just closed and beat against it. There was no answer and the door seemed firmly locked. She put her face in her hands and wept.

Oliviera did not come. At midnight she was still sitting in the room waiting. The Catalan had not appeared again.

Some little time after one the bell rang. Mrs. Guthrie nerved herself. She heard the Catalan go down, heard some one enter and heard some unintelligible words. She was rigid in her chair. The door opened behind her. It was not Oliviera.

She started up. The stranger was tall, bearded, clean-featured—a Frenchman plainly. He did not allow her to speak.

"I bear a message from Don Oliviera," he said quietly. "His words were these: 'Tell her that I knew she would come and that I did not dare to face her.'"

She looked at the man again. He understood her unspoken question.

"Yes, Madame," he answered, "he is dead. He fell at the first exchange of shots. His bullet went wild—I think, intentionally."

THE eyes of woman are the keyholes through which man peers into the rooms of her heart.

I LOVE MY HUSBAND

By Ruth Canfield

I LOVE my husband. When he comes home from the club, breathing loudly to himself, smelling of whisky, with chalk from a billiard cue on the sleeve of his coat . . . he explains so calmly that he has had to entertain a "customer from out West."

I love my husband. When he comes home from the theatre, humming a melody from a new musical comedy, a forgotten programme sticking in his coat pocket . . . he explains so fluently about the business banquet he attended.

I love my husband. When he comes home smelling of Mary Garden perfume, wearing a guilty expression, and with rice-powder on his shoulder . . . he explains so glibly about his evening with the boys at the club.

I love my husband. He is so amusing.

SHACKLES

By David Morton

IF one should cast his lute away
And close his eyes to dawn,
And fleeing from the stars, should say:
"Beauty and Song, be gone!

"For you have haunted all my days
With blowing shapes and snares:
No more I'll follow lovely ways,
Or capture tuneful airs."

So would he make a song that day,
Of all he had forgone:
If one should cast his lute away,
And close his eyes to dawn.

LIFE should be like the greatest book you have ever read.

THE UNSENTIMENTALISTS

By L. Bricconcella

HAD they been less evidently preoccupied with their propagandas, Mary Marshall and her assistant, William Jones, might both have paused to wonder at the uniformity of their temperaments and the chance which had brought two such eminently congenial personalities together.

There was, as a matter of truth, nothing marvellous in the mere physical facts of their first introduction. Jones had in quite the ordinary manner applied for a position with Mary Marshall and she had employed him. The singularity of this event lay simply in the chance that it should have been Jones, her very intellectual and emotional complement.

By the time Jones came out of college and began the business of earning a living, Mary had already assumed the editorial guide-ropes of the *Unsentimental Review*. Jones on his part took up the labours of a music critic. He had something of a singing voice, too, and proposed to develop it and in time give up criticism for performance. Had this original plan worked itself out, it is scarcely likely to suppose that Mary Marshall and William Jones would have ever even casually met each other.

But Jones was a pronounced unsentimentalist and the stuff he was called upon to criticise tried him severely. It would be difficult to trace the growth of his unsentimentality—if it really had any growth. Very probably it was the gift of Jones' birth. At any rate, this characteristic of his temperament rendered his critical labours highly uncongenial. His assignments frequently involved the journalistic reporting of the operas, but not the new first-presented operas nor the big revivals. For the most part he was subjected to an apparently unlimited list of *Trovatores, Lucias, Carmens, Manons, Lohengrins, Tristan und Isoldes*—and he sincerely detested them all and individually.

"The same old formula," Jones would mutter bitterly under his breath, as he arrived somewhere near the close of the second act. "A mob of asses on the stage endlessly making love to each other and wailing about it and sticking each other in the back about it and the Lord knows what!"

But Jones was quite aware that his paper would reduce any heretical remarks in general on Verdi and Bizet and Wagner and the rest of them to a point of extreme exiguity, wherefore he exuded his critical spleen upon the vocalists engaged, confidentially telling his readers that Caruso's manner rendered him excessively bilious, that Matzenauer's upper register resembled the violent moments of straight-jacket hysteria, that Jacques Urlus had the stage presence of a butcher—until presently there was a little side-door managerial remonstrance and Jones lost his job.

But to him this was neither shock nor surprise, for he had definitely determined on an early resignation anyway. He entered a business college at once, mastered the typewriter and stenography in a month and cast about him for some suitably unsentimental occupation as a private secretary or something of the sort.

In this connection he had some difficulty. Remunerative situations did not appear to stalk the streets in search of him and Jones began the personal round of many places, likely and un-

likely. It was in this quite casual and job-hunting fashion that he came into the editorial lair of the *Unsentimental Review*. He was fortunate enough to interview Mary herself.

"I'd like to have work with you folks," he told her, "where I'd have a little opportunity to do some writing myself."

"You have any experience?" she asked him.

He told her of his former employment.

"You don't have to part with a cent until you see what I can do," he said to her.

She liked his manner and what was more, needed an assistant who could take a certain amount of dictation. She employed him with the proviso that she *would* discharge him at once if he were not entirely satisfactory.

But Jones soon demonstrated his abilities with such congenial work as was permitted him with the *Review*. It was he, for instance, who worked up the special article entitled "Anti-Mush in Advertising," which caused Campbell's Soup to at once withdraw their half-page per month from the *Review*, but on the other hand occasioned G. B. Shaw to instruct Bretano's that his literary products be fully advertised in that journal. He was also responsible for the brilliantly illuminating attack on the practice of hand-shaking, which even among friends, the writer declared, was a rite not only needlessly sentimental, but positively prejudicial to the health.

"Owing to the great prevalence of piano-technique," Jones wrote, "a larger percentage of hand-shakers have an extraordinary development of the abductor minimi digiti manus and the other manual muscles. Consequently the hand is for the most part subjected to a vicious grinding and vise-like oppression, with the result that the first row of the phalanges is often permanently dislocated from its articulations with the metacarpal heads. In addition, there is the occasion of excessive bacterial transference and the subsequent fraternization of strange germs cannot be recommended in the cause of public hygiene."

This piece in particular attained such a popularity that a reprint in pamphlet form was discovered advisable and indeed in the end a soft leather-backed, limited edition de luxe, autographed by the author, was presented by the Roycrofters. The article was in fact the direct cause of the attacks afterwards directed against hand-shaking from the Ethical Culture Society, and was the immediate agent responsible for the formation of the League for Salutation by Nose-rubbing.

Also it was the publication of the same philippic that demonstrated to Mary the unusual worth of her collaborator.

When it was finally determined that the piece should go to press as a pamphlet, she shook him vigorously by the hand.

"You've given us a winner," she said.

"I hope so."

"If we keep on this way we'll make a different place out of this country in a year.

He assented vigorously.

"No question of that. All that is necessary is sufficient scientific unsentimental suggestion. . . . Give the people a set of rules . . ."

"And then see that they live by them."

"Exactly. . . ."

This marked the initiation of their closer literary association. Mary made it a custom now to go over the points of her articles with Jones before working them up, and Jones consulted her in a reciprocal manner. In this way they were frequently of considerable assistance to each other, particularly in those instances where a thought in the nascent state in one mind was caught up into a sudden resonance and development in a second brain. They arranged their desks, for the purpose of facilitating consultation, in juxtaposition, and all through the months of the autumn and winter Jones worked beside Mary six days out of every week and

on an average of eight or nine hours each day.

He never had had quite so much the sense of good fortune as during this term of six or seven months. His work he discovered was wholly in harmony with his temperament. He wrote what he believed, it was not necessary for him to simulate enthusiasm—there was none of the mangonism that had soured his previous writing endeavours.

He admired, too, his female chief, strictly of course for her sapience and intellectual penetration. Not a sentimental thought crossed his consciousness in connection with her. Had you asked him at this period the colour of her eyes he would first have been surprised at the irrelevancy of the query and would, second, have been utterly unable to satisfy your curiosity. In the same manner, had the question been put to him, he would have referred to her hair as yellow, and would have made use of no metaphorical descriptives of any character.

The first rift in Jones' silver-lined complacency made itself apparent in the early burgeoning months of the Spring.

Jones thought at first he was a trifle overworked and run down—although he could scarcely see how such a condition had come about—and consequently he purchased a bottle of Compound Syrup of the Hypophosphites and administered it to himself thrice daily as a tonic. But the medical excellences of this nostrum did not remove his indefinate sensation of mental and bodily discomfort. He made out his trouble to be a vague synthesis of languor and discontent, but could not by any means imagine why he should suffer from either of these elements.

A friend to whom he confided his annoyance assured him that his symptoms were unquestionably commonplace and resulted simply from the change of season.

"You take a good brisk walk every evening," this informant advised him. "That'll get the winter cobwebs out of your blood."

To Jones there appeared a considerable degree of the reasonable in this advice and he concluded to at least *try* the cure peripatetic.

On the first evening he trudged as far as the park and found himself not at all accustomed to pedestrianism and foot-tired. He selected a bench and seated himself with a very definite relief. It was rather luxurious, he found, to sit quietly and watch the crowds. Analysis presented these mostly in units of two, a man and a woman. Some of these couples made among themselves unabashed demonstrations of amativeness. Jones agreed with his judgment that these exhibitions were in the least estimate superlatively silly.

He perceived himself interested in a very young girl seated diagonally opposite him. She was alone and appeared to be thoughtfully observing the sky. He noticed that she wore a yellow dress, low in the neck and matched with partly visible yellow stockings and low shoes, and that she looked very cool. It occurred to Jones that in a fanciful poetical manner she resembled a flower. He toyed a moment with this notion and rejected it suddenly with anger. What an utterly fatuous sentimentality! She was an immature female of the genus homo—how could she be a flower? It was one of those absurd ineptitudes into which a tired brain will wander. He decided that his brain was in fact quite tired.

It must be, he thought, the work. Not that the hours were at all exceptional but that the whole thing was for the most part mental labour. Perhaps he could arrange for an early vacation. An early vacation was really necessary for it was quite useless to expect an actually tired brain to respond scintillantly to requirements.

He looked at the girl and the idea occurred to him to talk to her. But a consummation of this notion would demand that he walk over to her bench, which of course he could not do as he had no acquaintance with her.

Also, she could not be anything over sixteen.

He wondered what she would talk about or even what he would talk about.

These youthful maidens could not be expected to have any great conversational power.

None the less, it might be interesting to talk to her.

Perhaps, Jones mused, she would not consider it so unconventional if he did cross over to her bench—there is a reasonable way of doing these things. Conventions in fact were extremely stupid barriers when they trust themselves between a man and his entirely unsentimental wish to make conversation with another human being.

He rested his thoughts for several moments on this aspect. Perhaps there was material for a very successful article here — an attack on sentimental conventions.

An entirely irrelevant idea obtruded itself. The young girl was pretty. Jones was on the point of corroborating this appraisement when he hesitated and slightly shook his head. It was the brink of dangerous ground. Was it in strict accordance with a severely unsentimental habit of thought to use such a terminology as pretty? At any rate she had an agreeable conformation of features. One could venture this safely.

He was distracted from his meditative uncertainties by a young fellow, a cigarette between his lips, inquiring for a match. Jones did not smoke and never carried matches and he told the young man that he had none. The lad, with his cigarette still unlit, resumed his walk and Jones saw him pass slowly by the young girl's bench. He was surprised to witness the youth retrace a few of his steps and seat himself on her particular bench, beside her. He expected to observe an indignant protest, but there was none. He watched them converse a few minutes and then they both arose. The girl in the yellow dress put her arm through that of her new acquaintance and they walked off together.

Jones recognized an unaccountable and wholly irritating sense of loss. He remained seated himself only a short period longer and then he arose and sought a street car. He felt even worse than he had before he commenced his stroll. There certainly could be very little in the walking cure. The picture of the yellow-dressed girl, with her arm linked in the youth's, returned to disturb him more than once during the night.

He did not sleep at all well. For some not entirely evident reason he perceived a growing regret in his consciousness that he had not knocked the offensive and unlighted cigarette out of the fellow's undesirable mouth. He was certainly too young to smoke cigarettes, anyhow. Altogether, Jones did not gather much more than two hours of actual slumber out of the whole long night.

Mary noticed his heavy lids the next morning.

"You must have been out late," she said.

"I was in bed by ten o'clock," he told her.

"You had too much sleep then."

"I didn't have any sleep at all."

"Why not?"

"I don't know why. . . ."

She paused, a trifle surprised at this reply. It was not precisely of the order she had reason to expect. Jones usually presented a front of great intellectual clearness. His habit was never to be in any way muddled nor afflicted with the numerous fatuities of the sensation panderers. She was, however, feeling, singularly, a little out of sorts herself and she did not find it in her humour to press him to the point of a greater definiteness.

Jones at any rate offered no sort of additional explication, but seated himself at his desk and raised his typewriter from the well and inserted a sheet of paper. He had commenced an article the afternoon before assailing the growing nuisance of philandering in the city parks. He had not progressed far then and had torn up the completed

sheets before closing his desk for the day.

Now he stared at the keys of his typewriter, fiddled with the space-bar and wrote nothing.

Peculiarly, he could not bring himself sufficiently into sympathy with the righteousness of his topic. When he had conceived it, it had seemed an admirable subject for one of the minor editorial disquisitories.

Mary interrupted his aimless key-staring.

"I'm beginning the osculation article," she said.

"Yes . . . ?"

"You've read up on the bacteria business better than I. What are the organisms anyway?"

He rubbed his hand wearily over his forehead and through his hair before replying.

"*Staphylococcus pyogenes*, chiefly," he said.

"But that's more or less generic."

"Well, specifically, *albus* and *aureus*."

For a moment the unshriven notion presented itself that sweating over labial flora was carrying the plausible to an extreme humectation. He decapitated this thought rather savagely and at the same time observed his chief sigh heavily.

"I can't seem to whip this thing into shape," she said. "I've attempted two or three beginnings and put them all in the basket."

"It's the weather," he said.

"The weather . . . ?"

"Yes, I've felt queer on my part for nearly a month now. I believe you feel like I do."

"But how *do* you feel?"

He was on the point of giving this an answer when he paused with his mouth opened and looked intently at her. He perceived suddenly a relation between Mary, his unsentimental co-worker, and his sensations of the past few weeks. She appealed to him at the moment as something feminine. He was somewhat frightened at this discovery and inclined to retract its admission, but found he could not do so. Moreover, he discovered himself impelled into strange desires. They were not even possessed of a definite formulation, yet he arose from his stool and approached the other desk, looking steadily at the seated woman. He saw her eyes grow it seemed considerably in size and he was sure that she inhaled a little breath and held it. He reached her side and stood just a moment irresolute. Then what exactly was his desire came to him.

Bending down to her he kissed her.

There was only a second of silence when he stood erect again. She seized him enthusiastically by the arm.

"Jones!" she exclaimed. "That was an inspiration. It was just the vivifying touch I required. Now I can write my article. Without it I might have been mooning around all day."

She pointed to his desk.

"Won't you sit down and help me?" she asked. "If you'll take my dictation I can put the thing through in no time . . . the greatest anti-kiss article we ever sent to press."

Jones caught a measure of her enthusiasm. He perceived indeed that there had been lifted from him his burden of oppression. Perhaps there was a belated virtue in hypophosphites after all. He felt a surge of scientific transport and searched in his desk for a stenographer's note-book.

"Ready . . ." he said, presently.

"When," began Mary, "the labial surfaces appropinquate and finally achieve an approximation, there is an immediate and deadly intermingling of the mutual bacterial floras. . . ."

Jones nodded his head with approval. They worked without intermission for more than an hour.

"Fine," announced Jones, as he set down the final characters. "It should make quite a stir and cut down any amount of this sentimental osculation evil."

"I believe so," she agreed.

And then she raised her head and quite as a matter of course, he stooped to kiss her . . .

ON BEING IN LOVE

By John Hamilton

I KNOW how one feels who is in love.

* * * * *

Once I was persuaded to wear a sport shirt.

Once a caterpillar crawled over my bare foot.

Once at a banquet I was called upon unexpectedly to make a speech.

Once I had a tooth pulled.

Once I applauded in church..

Once when I was a little boy I was served two ice cream sodas at once.

Once I was mistaken for an escaped convict.

Once I held a baby.

Once the house caught on fire when I was taking my bath.

Once I swore in front of a Baptist minister.

Once I stepped on a cat.

Once a waiter put salt into my demi-tasse instead of sugar.

Once my hot-water bag leaked while I slept.

* * * * *

I know how one feels who is in love.

IF HEARTS WERE STARS

By Bertha Bolling

IF hearts of mine were only stars,
Gilding the dusk for me;
Glowing so true, from out life's blue;
How bright my heavens would be!

The great ones, gold and glorious,
Shining so strong and bright;
And all the gentle little ones
Silvering the darkest night!

I'll name you stars, oh hearts of mine;
Placing you high above
All other things within my soul—
Upon my sky of love!

EPISODE BEHIND A SYNTHETIC PALM

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

"ALICE," I said, offering her my arm and leading the way toward the conservatory, "I think I shall kiss you."

She came with me readily enough. Too readily, I thought. Whenever a woman is willing to be kissed, she has either been kissed too frequently, or not frequently enough. I do not care to run a kindergarten in osculation, neither do I care to be among the many who have the privilege of a lady's lips.

As we picked our way through the couples that crowded the ballroom floor, I glanced at the girl who walked so lightly beside me. Her hand lay quietly in the crook of my arm, and her bare shoulders floated alongside me. Her mouth was small, and scarlet, and quivering.

As she preceded me into the conservatory I noticed a dimple in her shoulder, just above the edge of her gown. My admiration increased.

As she settled into a seat that was shielded from the public gaze by a large and particularly opaque group of artificial palms, she asked me the usual question:

"Why do you want to kiss me?"

Her eyes were large and brilliant, they moved slowly as though realizing that they were effective. Her lids drooped ever so slightly, not concealing the splendour of her eyes.

I started to reply, but suddenly remembered that I had just met her. Perhaps I should inquire the rest of her name.

"I called you Alice," I said, "because I heard someone else call you that—"

"'Alice' will do," she replied.

"What is the rest of your name?"

"Do you have to know my name before you will kiss me?"

Again I noticed the vitality of her mouth. It curved lovingly around her words, giving each syllable a caress before its utterance.

"I would like to know something about you," I said. "First, do you scream when you are kissed?"

She smiled, a lazy light flickered in her eyes.

"I never have," she answered.

"Second, are you kissed . . . frequently?"

"Too frequently . . . by some people."

I became mildly angry at the "some people." Why should this dainty woman, so vibrant with the delight of living, be caressed against her will? I promised myself I would discover the scoundrel, and thrash him. Alice should not be annoyed by presumptuous animals, I would attend to them. For the moment I forgot that I was married, and would have difficulty in explaining to my wife this sudden interest in another woman.

She evidently thought I had forgotten her, for she leaned against my shoulder. Her lips were temptingly pursed, and she was evidently waiting.

"Well?" she said.

I possess several clearly definite ideas on this subject which I shall elaborate for your benefit at another time. For the present let me say that a man who kisses a beautiful woman without a survey of the situation is not only a barbarian, he is a fool.

To experience any emotion in its entirety, one should not only enjoy it in

anticipation, and in realization, one should also so participate that afterwards, in retrospection, one will be pleased with one's behaviour in the situation. Therefore, I swiftly glanced around, mentally photographed the surroundings, her head bent forward and the full carmine of her lips, and lingered over these preliminaries until she was thirsting for the caress.

I heard the clink of high heels coming toward us. We coolly resumed a normal position and waited until the steps should pass our resting place. Thinking I recognized the sound of the steps, I looked out and found my wife was coming toward us, a man I had never seen before accompanying her.

"Who is that?" whispered Alice beside me.

"My wife," I answered.

As they reached a point directly in front of us, the man drew my wife toward him. She did not object.

I turned to Alice. She was watching them with an amused smile on her face.

"Who is that man?" I asked.

"My husband," she answered drolly. "The one who . . . too frequently."

As I kissed Alice I felt superior to her husband. For my wife has no dimple in her shoulder.

THE DANGEROUS AGE

By Grace Harlowe

I TELL him I adore the odour of his abominable cigarettes;
I insist that I am delighted with his ready-made clothes;
I request his opinions on politics, and ethics, and the drama;
Though his politics are inherited from his father,
Though his ethics are derived from a Y.M.C.A.,
Though his ideas about drama are procured from the moving-pictures,
I hang upon his words,
And applaud when he has made an exceptionally obvious statement.
For I am twenty-nine,
And when a woman has reached that age
She will listen to any man talk,
Provided,
He is not married,
Nor in the almshouse.

THERE is nothing more agreeable than to get credit for a virtue one does not possess. And nothing more unheard of.

A CIGARETTE

By Lawrence Vail

IN the corner of a grey street Conrad smoked a cigarette. The blue smoke rose drowsily into the wet air; the spark flashed more boldly than Venus on a clear night.

Conrad was waiting. He was not waiting for a woman, not even for a man. He was waiting only for something to happen.

Life blustered through the grey street in awkward, uneasy gusts. Her tragedians and comedians shuffled by—bungling their parts. It appeared to Conrad that the prompter must have fallen asleep. Or, perhaps, they were merely understudies. With a movement of his little finger he flicked the grey ash of his cigarette onto the grey pavement. He wondered whether he was an understudy for someone.

A limousine stopped in front of No. 16. A lady stepped forth into the wet night. A white mantle enfolded her from her throat to her ankles. She wore a white scorn from her curls to her toes. A grey dreariness filled her brain and her heart. Her soul spun around her like a famished cat around a bowl that had once contained a pint of warm milk.

She was thinking that a foreign gentleman had told her she had pretty feet. How thoughtful they were—these foreigners, how unlike Americans. At that moment she slipped on the peel of an orange. A mild cry of vexation broke from her. Conrad made an indefinite gesture to rescue her, then quickly restrained himself. The grey ash of his cigarette fell onto the grey pavement.

On the corner of the grey street Conrad smoked his cigarette. The spark seemed something greater than Jupiter and something less than a carrot. The blue smoke curved lazily towards grey heaven. It appeared to have little ambition to reach heaven.

Life blustered along—uneasily, awkwardly. A child wept because her doll was broken. A drunkard stumbled, shouting, as he passed, an obscene ditty. A policeman looked at his broad-toed boots. A newsboy ran, scattering the news of the day. Two women talked ribbons and bargains and imagined they were happy. A poet blew his nose surreptitiously and imagined he was sad. A shop girl stopped to pull up her stocking.

A woman with a sad mouth and gay heels to her shoes smiled at Conrad. Her glance seemed a live wire drawing him to a new little world. Two fat women looked at him and laughed; he found himself—he knew not why—thinking of soup. A man with a black overcoat and a depressingly straight back solemnly asked him the hour. With a movement of his little finger Conrad flicked the grey ash of his cigarette onto the grey pavement.

The woman with the sad mouth returned and laughed at him. Her gay heels made a gay din on the pavement. He had the feeling that he had followed her into a new little world, that it had become a shabby old little world, and that he was saying good-bye to her. She seemed to understand and moved on rapidly.

A drop of rain fell from the sky and made a black stain on the pavement.

"The scribe of the Gods," thought Conrad, "is shaking his pen. Poor fellow! What else can he do? And what could he write? There is surely nothing in heaven to write about."

Conrad smiled. He thought himself very clever.

With a movement of his little finger Conrad flicked the grey ash of his cigarette onto the grey pavement. More raindrops fell.

"The scribe of the Gods is growing desperate," thought Conrad. "How foolish of him!"

And he laughed.

A girl passed and opened her umbrella. The wind blew against her, outlining her little sharp knees. A spinster had trouble with her long skirt; she lifted it, showing a rough woollen stocking. Conrad scratched his back.

Conrad's cigarette tasted hot against his lips. He threw it away. It shone on the pavement like a sentimental morsel of sunset. More raindrops fell. Umbrellas floated awkwardly along the grey street like swollen, bourgeois balloons. The rain played on them like little twigs on a drum.

Of a sudden a large drop of rain fell on the spark of Conrad's cigarette. There was a sound like that of a baby snake hissing.

Life blustered through the street in awkward, uneasy gusts. Conrad's cigarette had come to the end of its life. And Conrad was older.

THE NEW SONG

By Harold Cook

OF old she mused about the winds
That pass with whisperings of leaves,
Of little kindred in the grass
And swallows moving in the eaves.

And she would look with wonder eyes
Upon the bursting of a dawn,
Or draw the curtain of the room
To watch a moon above the lawn.

Ah, but now has Love come
With all dawn's beauty in his eyes,
With mysteries of things that lie
Within the roofs of paradise.

And now her song is of his hair,
That it is like a golden sun,
That his arms are a little house
After a sullen day is done.

WHEN a man decides he is sensible enough to select a wife he is too old for the frivolous maidens he would like to marry.

LE SABOT DE CHERININA

By Edmond Lahaye

A CAUSE d'un différend survenu au sujet de certaines limites litigieuses, entre les ingénieurs de l'Etat et plusieurs particuliers, les coupes de bois avaient été arrêtées momentanément. Comme il fallait des gens peu exigeants, incorruptibles et braves, pour servir de sequestre, on pensa de suite à Edmond Chérinina, le contremaître, et à sa jeune épouse Régina, qui acceptèrent, pour ce faire, de passer la mauvaise saison tout en haut de la montagne, dans une maison en planches, couverte de tuiles rouges, établie solidement afin de résister facilement aux pluies, aux tourmentes de neige, et aux bourrasques.

Chérinina se servait du joli diminutif "Ninette" pour nommer sa femme; elle, charmante, l'appelait simplement "petit mari" . . .

C'était un couple merveilleusement assorti. Elle, jolie et lui bien; mais ce qui était encore mieux, c'est que leurs âmes communiaient sans cesse, aussi bien dans le bonheur que dans le malheur.

Ils s'aimaient d'amour, et aussi d'une douce et solide amitié, l'amitié; cet attachement mutuel nécessaire, plus grand que l'amour, qui ne peut subsister sans son aide.—Ils étaient donc amants et amis, vivant en partageant les mêmes idées, les mêmes occupations, les mêmes distractions. Un chien de la race du Mont St. Bernard, était resté avec eux pour garder les coupes de bois.

Tout marcha à souhait les premiers temps. Régulièrement, ils recevaient tous les deux jours des vivres que le père Jean, un vieux schlitteur dévoué, leur apportait avec les nouvelles d'en bas. Bien qu'ils fussent isolés, ils ne s'ennuyaient point; pour eux, être seuls était presque un bonheur.

Ils étaient, d'ailleurs, suffisamment instruits et éprouvaient de la joie en lisant de bons auteurs, car ils savaient les apprécier. Les passe-temps ne leur manquaient donc pas, ayant eu le soin de se munir de livres en quantité suffisante. Quand ils voulaient jouir des chefs-d'œuvres des grands maîtres, ils le faisaient en commun, d'une façon charmante. Régina s'asseyait gentiment à côté d'Edmond, la tête appuyée sur son épaule, et l'écoutait lire religieusement, presque avec extase. Alors, la voix mâle d'Edmond n'était guère troublée, pendant de longues heures; pourtant, Régina ne pouvait s'empêcher de donner de temps à autres un baiser à son mari, tant elle était heureuse.

Cependent, la neige fit son apparition, modifiant graduellement, en tombant, l'aspect des choses.

Et d'abord, ce fut une joie pour Régina, qui en admira la blancheur; mutine, elle se surprit même quelquefois à confectionner des boulettes, pour les jeter gracieusement à son mari, en riant aux éclats.

Pourtant, bientôt, il fallut déchanter. Depuis huit jours, la neige tombait sans interruption, bien qu'on leur ait affirmé que cela ne durait jamais plus de deux au trois jours. Les routes étaient certainement devenues impraticables, car ils n'avaient point eu, comme d'ordinaire, la visite du vieux schlitteur. Edmond s'inquiétait mais restait gai

quand même, voulant donner du courage à sa femme, qu'il ne pouvait cependant tromper, car elle lisait clairement en lui et pensait avec lui.

Rapidement, la neige fit disparaître sous ses épaisses couches, le rez-de-chaussée de la maison, il fallut monter au premier étage pour y voir. Les provisions fraîches étaient complètement épuisées, Edmond et sa femme durent entamer les conserves. Mais, la neige continuant toujours son œuvre d'enfouissement, les conserves mêmes manquèrent bientôt. Alors, ce fut l'atroce faim. La faim qui, tiraillant l'estomac des deux jeunes, gens, leur fit crier les entrailles et claquer des dents.

Un matin, alors qu'ils avaient passé une nuit à souffrir atrocement, tous deux assis au coin du feu, le chien entra, les yeux fous et flamboyants, se battant les flancs avec sa queue. Sa gueule, grande ouverte et pleine de bave, laissait à découvert ses énormes crocs.

Lentement et menaçant, il s'avançait presque en rampant, vers ses maîtres, qu'il semblait ne plus connaître. Plus de doute, il était atteint d'hydrophobie.

Epouvantée, Régina pâle, défaite, s'était jetée dans les bras de son mari. Edmond ne perdit point la tête, d'un coup de pied, il envoya rouler son sabot près de l'animal, qui, s'en emparant, le mordit avec rage; cela laissa le temps à Chérinina d'armer le révolver qu'il portait constamment à sa ceinture. D'un seul coup de feu, il abattit la bête qui se tordit dans des convulsions horribles avant de mourir. Vite, Edmond l'enterra dans la neige, afin de ne pas avoir la tentation d'en dévorer la chair.

Cette situation ne pouvait durer, Chérinina prit une résolution énergique; mais, avant même qu'il ait eu le temps de la formuler, Régina l'avait comprise:

— "Essayons, dit-elle, et à la grâce de Dieu!"

Et tous deux, se tenant par la main, après s'être équipés, s'engagèrent dans la neige afin de gagner le bas de la montagne.

Quelques jours après ces évènements, la neige ayant cessé de tomber, et même commencé à fondre, une équipe de sauveteurs, sous la direction du vieux schlitteur, partit au secours des époux Chérinina.

Après bien des fatigues et des recherches, et aussi après avoir visité leur maison, qu'ils trouvèrent naturellement vide, ils finirent par découvrir leurs corps raidis par la mort. Dans un blanc linceul de neige, Edmond et Régina étaient enlacés, leurs lèvres unies faisaient comprendre qu'ils étaient morts en se donnant un dernier baiser.

Actuellement, on peut voir encore, sur la côte orientale de la montagne, une grande croix de bois portant cette inscription:

"Passant prie pour ceux qui périrent à cette place!"

Edmond et Régina furent enterrés à cet endroit, ils s'aimèrent d'un amour sans nuages, d'un amour "Aere perennius."

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IMPORTANT NOTE.—Mrs. Hudson belongs to a family high in Society, and is the widow of a prominent Army Officer, so you can write her with every confidence. Address as above.

ABOUT FASHIONS AND OTHER THINGS

By Various Hands

We have agreed that luxuries must be taxed, but the point that few people will agree upon is what constitutes a luxury? I feel that I could write quite an interesting and amusing article on the subject, but this is not the place, and I have dragged in the debatable "luxury" for the sole purpose of pointing out that artificial flowers, although apparently superfluous adornment, should not be taxed out of existence, for the reason that they, in many cases, render self-supporting poor crippled girls who by reason of their physical infirmities are unfit for War work, and would become unwilling parasites if their occupation were taken away. And despite economies, I am glad to say, there promises to be a perfect orgy of flower-trimmed hats. Tulle hats too are to be very much in favour, and some of these have petals of different flowers sandwiched between the transparent layers of tulle forming the brim. A few houses are still faithful to the high crown, but others are trying to bring in a far smaller and more closely-fitting shape. This last silhouette refers more especially to the small draped toques of lace or silk that usually terminate in a long floating veil, and are often trimmed with a small wreath of flowers, and a band of coloured moire ribbon knotted at the back.

"Veni, vidi, vici," says the kilt. Wherever it goes it has only to be seen to conquer—particularly where the feminine heart is concerned. Paris is still faithful in her admiration, one of the newest models sent over here lately being a kilted affair. The front one long pleated panel, and the sides and back were simply two kilts, one on the top of the other. In this way the fascinating shortness was preserved, and yet the length of the frock itself was "of the most discreet" as its designer would say! It was carried out in taffetas, with a little cross-over bodice, short three-quarter length sleeves with sleeves of tulle, a little vest and floating collar of tulle caught with little blue moire bows, and a neat waist outlined with blue moire, from which were suspended two long blue ends each side of the front, weighted with little rosebuds.

THE DAYLIGHT DINNER FROCK

The Daylight Dinner Frock is a need of the moment, and I found a very delightful one composed of two long wide widths of black charmeuse slung over each shoulder to form panels back and front to the hem of the skirt. These panels were caught in and slightly draped at the waist by a grey crêpe-de-chine sash. The under-dress was entirely composed of pale grey pleated georgette, with long transparent sleeves to match. A large pink La France rose completed this very simple but graceful and pretty little daylight dinner frock.

Talking of daylight dinners reminds me of the new little georgette and net jumper blouses that it has brought into being. For the economically minded these are a god-send. Most of us have an old black evening skirt. With this it is easy enough to make a black camisole out of wide satin ribbon, and behold a foundation for the filmiest of georgette jumpers! These vary very much. A white one trimmed with silver thread embroidery, and with long loose sash ends, looks delightful over the black. Many changes can be wrought both in colour, embroidery, and the shape of the jumper.

A very pretty alliance for afternoon frocks is that of figured cotton voile and foulard. The cotton voile forms most of the bodice and also the apron

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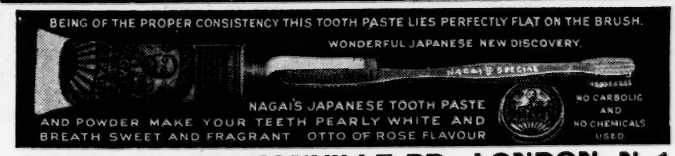
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Shampoo *(6 packets)*
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on the skirt, while the foulard is used for the wide loose belt effect, and for the draped skirt itself. Cotton voiles are prettier than ever in spite of the difficulties in producing them, and promise to play an important rôle this summer. One clever French house has contrived to economise in its coat and skirt serge by cutting the navy blue skirt into four loose panels, and making an underskirt of light blue spotted voile. The very short straight little coat is also slit up at the sides, and a blouse of the voile completes an original toilette.

Although it was intended that skirts should be longer this year, it has been found that every little scrap of material counts, and as we are trying to be economical, our skirts are still as short as ever, and only a few Paris houses are trying to encourage the longer ones. Many of the new coats are very short too, and very straight, though as a matter of fact almost any length of coat can be worn with equal success this year. There is a very delightful wrap coat to be seen about rather on the lines of an opera cloak of happier times. In pre-war days the material chosen would have been charmeuse or rich brocade trimmed with white. Now, although we preserve the fascinating shape, a cloak of this sort is needed for more practical purposes, so it is usually carried out in some sober thick material such as Jrissa, which is a coarse loosely-woven fabric or Burbura, or Velursine —a velours with a fluffy woollen surface. The linings of these wraps run riot in many bright and beautiful colourings, while the collars and cuffs are often carried out in contrasting shades of Duvetyn.

ON GROWING OLD

We must grow old, but we need not look so, as we may prove to our complete satisfaction by seeking the aid of Mrs. Adair, of 92, New Bond Street, London. If young people only take time by the forelock and use the Ganesh preparations they need never fear deep lines and hollows. The middle-aged woman can be sure that the glass will not show up fresh lines every time she rises from sleep, and by degrees the old-standing lines can be obliterated by the help of the wonderful Ganesh Muscle Oil, which may rightly be termed a youth restorer, as it fills out hollows and keeps the skin in a healthy condition. It is used with the Ganesh Cream, which is made up to suit all skins. The Ganesh Diable Tonic tones, whitens, and strengthens the skin, and is an invaluable wash for tired eyes. With these Ganesh preparations we can defy Old Father Time, and, like Ninon de l'Enclos, keep our looks to extreme old age. Mrs. Adair has had to raise the price of some of her preparations, and she will be pleased to send the new prices to any intending clients, who will find that the prices are not raised out of proportion to the benefit received by using Mrs. Adair's preparations.

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